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WHY THE OSCARS STILL KEEP US GRIPPED

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DANIEL JOHNSON

My week with The Little Book of Calm

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Scepticism stays - but not time limit

Hague ready to tone down EMU policy

By JILL SHERMAN, CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

WILLIAM HAGUE is poised to water down his policy of ruling out Britain's entry to a single currency for ten years in a desperate attempt to unite the party before next year's European elections.

Party managers are preparing a new formula that would leave the Tories strongly sceptical about monetary union but not put a time limit on Britain's exclusion. They are also expected to abandon plans to ballot all party members on the policy.

It would be Mr Hague's second change of stance on the euro in 12 months: the first was last November when the party's policy was changed from ruling out membership for the "foreseeable future" to the ten-year time limit.

Mr Hague's advisers now say that he never really liked that formula - which led to the resignations of the shadow ministers David Curry and Ian Taylor - but that he was "bounced into it" during the leadership campaign.

The new policy, which will go to the Shadow Cabinet for approval shortly, is mainly designed to reassure pro-European Tories and prospective MEPs who have been urging Mr Hague to adopt a more realistic policy. They have argued that it is almost impossible to campaign for the European elections with such a hard line on a single currency - especially as many

of them disagree with the stance.

The Tories are also under pressure from the business community to tone down the policy: party managers are aware that many companies are backing Labour because of their favourable stance on the single currency and want to woo them back to the Tory fold.

Sources close to Mr Hague say that rather than ruling out membership for a specified timetable, the new policy will say that it is unworkable and impossible to join before a series of stringent economic and political criteria have been met.

Mr Hague and his allies are still working out these criteria - which are the subject of heated debate - but he is expected to outline the new approach in more detail in a speech in Paris at the end of May.

Mr Hague will have a difficult task persuading hardliners including John Redwood and Iain Duncan-Smith to accept the change, but he will try to persuade them that the new formula is more flexible and could, in theory, lead to membership of a single currency being ruled out sooner. Mr Hague's own instincts are very sceptical and some say he supports the "never line".

His advisers are, however, nervous that the Tories will

not be able to attract enough high calibre candidates unless they can present a more pragmatic approach. They have also warned him that unless he moves on the issue, the next 18 months will be dominated by an internal war over Europe - both within the parliamentary party and among grassroots members. They fear that unless a compromise is reached, the issue will take over the European election campaign just as it did last year's general election campaign.

The shift coincides with signs that the leadership has also ditched the idea of holding a ballot of all members on the single currency policy. That idea was fiercely opposed by the pro-European Kenneth Clarke and Michael Heseltine - who argued it would fatally split the party. Mr Hague was committed to a ballot but several Eurosceptic members of the Shadow Cabinet now concede that it is unlikely to take place. One said that it was unnecessary to reopen the issue and would be too expensive. It is much more likely to be subsumed in the next election manifesto.

Nevertheless some of Mr Hague's closest advisers are wary of publicly ruling out a ballot. They believe that it should be held as a "sword of Damocles" over the pro-Europeans.



Andrew Thornton celebrating his Cheltenham Gold Cup victory on the 25-1 outsider Cool Dawn yesterday. The horse - originally bought to give its owner, Dido Harding, a "safe" point-to-point ride - beat another longshot, Strong Promise, into second. The favourite, Dorans Pride, was third. Page 51

Cot death fear for babies on long flights

By IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

BABIES taken on long-haul flights may be at risk of cot death, research published today has shown.

The study, published in the *British Medical Journal*, found that a small proportion of babies suffer ill-effects if they breathe air with oxygen levels similar to those in long-range jet aircraft for several hours.

The research was carried out because of anecdotal evidence that babies had died following long flights. David Southall, from the academic department of paediatrics at the North Staffordshire Hospital Centre, Stoke-

on-Trent, writes that two sets of parents reported to his outpatient department that they lost a baby, in one case some 19 hours after a flight and in the other 41 hours after a flight.

He recruited 34 healthy babies for the tests, including 13 from parents who had already lost a baby from cot death. The babies were put in a cot with an oxygen tent. On one night the air was normal and on the second it was reduced for six hours from the normal level of 21 per cent oxygen in the air to 15 per cent oxygen.

The babies were carefully monitored while they slept and on the second night four of them developed distressing conditions associated with lack of

sufficient oxygen in the system, such as disturbed heart rhythms and shortness of breath. These babies were immediately given extra oxygen and recovered quickly.

None of the babies in the trial was born prematurely, had a history of breathing problems or congenital abnormality. They were aged between one and six months. The different responses suggest some babies could be more vulnerable to this form of stress than others, Dr Southall says.

"Was it ethically justified to expose healthy infants to 15 per cent oxygen?" he asks in the study. "Many infants travelling on aeroplanes or to holidays at high altitude are exposed to similar

or even more markedly reduced partial pressures of inspired oxygen. Yet this exposure is considered safe."

Dr Southall says evidence that babies are affected by low oxygen levels is borne out by a study carried out three years ago at Lhasa in Tibet, which is at an altitude of 12,000ft.

This showed that babies born to the indigenous population were able to absorb more oxygen from the rarified air than babies of Chinese parents who had recently moved to the city. The level of cot deaths among the Chinese babies was disproportionately high.

In an editorial commenting on the study, Anthony Milner, Professor of

Continued on page 2, col 5

Loyalist threat to Maze officers

The Loyalist Volunteer Force threatened "direct action" against prison officers at the Maze last night if any of its 30 inmates were mistreated after the murder of David Keys in his cell last weekend. At least ten members of the terrorist group were being questioned in Belfast. Page 12

Shares soar

The stock market soared to another all-time high yesterday, with the FTSE 100 index rising 94.3 points to 5,997.9 and expected to breach the 6000 mark today. The pound continued strongly. Pages 29, 39

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Portugal P 2.00; Spain P 2.00;
Sweden S 2.00; Switzerland S 2.00;
Turkey T 2.00; USA \$25.00.

Flogging in schools and hanging for treason to go

By JAMES LANDALE, POLITICAL REPORTER

FLOGGING for public schoolboys and the death penalty for treason and piracy are about to become the latest ancient punishments to be banned by Parliament.

The cane is to be banned entirely from the classroom after a Commons vote next week to abolish corporal punishment in public schools.

The death penalty for treason and piracy in peacetime will almost certainly be removed from the statute book after the move was agreed by peers last night.

Although the cane has been banned in state-funded schools since 1987, it remains legal in the independent sector and is still used in a handful of schools.

Labour MPs yesterday tabled a new clause to the School Standards and Framework Bill which would extend the existing ban to private schools. Don Foster, the Liberal Demo-



"This is going to hurt me more than it's going to hurt you, Arkwright"

cratic education spokesman, had tabled his own amendment to the Bill but ministers decided it would be unworkable. Instead, a new clause - backed by the Government - has been drawn up by parliamentary draftsmen which would amend the Children

and Young Persons' Act 1933. It also replaces a section of the Education Act 1996.

Gordon Marsden, the Labour MP for Blackpool South and one of the eight co-sponsors of the new clause, said: "Corporal punishment has withered away in most public schools. But what this clause does is give a civilised conclusion to what has been an ineffective and barbaric practice for centuries."

MPs have been given a free vote when the new clause comes up in the Commons on Tuesday. Although the move will be opposed by many Tory MPs, the ban is likely to win the support of most Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs.

The Piracy Act of 1837 imposes the death penalty for offences of piracy involving "assault with intent to murder" but has not been used since 1860. Treason, which dates back to 1351, includes murder of the King and Queen and his eldest son and heir, and violating the Queen.

Blair rebuked over Grand Prix visit

By PHILIP WEBSTER, POLITICAL EDITOR

TONY BLAIR was rapped by the Commons standards watchdog yesterday for failing to declare a family visit to the 1996 British Grand Prix.

The Committee on Standards and Privileges backed Sir Gordon Downey's finding that Mr Blair should have registered the hospitality - as six other MPs who attended the event did.

Mr Blair was Leader of the Opposition when he, his wife, Cherie, and their children went to the race as guests of the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile, Formula One's governing body. Mr Blair said in a letter to Sir Gordon that he regarded the visit as part of his official duties and pointed out that he had left soon after the start of the race.

The slap on the wrist was swiftly accepted by Downing Street, which said the Prime Minister respected the committee's decision. The trip has now been registered.

By any standards it was a relatively minor issue, and the MP who laid the complaint, Andrew Robathan, accepted there was no "wicked intent", but it was an unwanted and unexpected embarrassment that revived memories of the row over Bernie Ecclestone's £1 million donation to the Labour Party and the decision to exempt Formula One from a ban on tobacco sponsorship.

Downing Street admitted that Mr Blair had met Mr Ecclestone, the Formula One chief, at the 1996 Grand Prix but that "absolutely no money was discussed at all".

In his submission to Sir Gordon, the Prime Minister said that he had been invited to Silverstone as Leader of the Labour Party and, in that capacity, had had discussions with the FIA and other organisations.

Sir Gordon said: "He Continued on page 2, col 5

Peter Riddell, page 10

It's kosher: the Jewish mother of all game shows

By CAROL MIDGLEY, MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

JEWISH mothers are to be granted their ultimate dream - a wry version of the TV show *Blind Date* will allow them to handpick their son's girlfriends.

The Jewish matriarch, famed for her over-protectiveness, will also be able to select suitable husbands for her daughters.

The new game show *Jewish Blind Date* will form part of the line-up in a digital channel JTV (Jewish Television) to be launched later this year. It follows the same format as the IWT

version but the selector's mother will sit behind the screen with her son or daughter firing questions at the three hopefuls beyond.

Marcel Knobil, spokesman for JTV, said: "From what we have seen it will be hilarious. Jewish mothers are wonderful, forceful characters and there is nothing more superstitious in their mind than finding a match for their son or daughter."

"There is a tremendous pressure to find the right person. When I took my first girlfriend home my mother hated her. Someone told me to find someone who was the image of my mother. I did and my mother adored

her. The only problem was, my father couldn't stand her."

The new channel will also feature documentaries, news and debate programmes, including *Jews in the News* and the *Jewish Muppet Show*. There will be a comedy slot where Jewish comedians will be "challenged to tell jokes without using hands". Close-down is nicknamed "enough already".

However, there will also be a serious element with detailed news programmes from Israel and around the world, reviews and sport.

The Institute for Jewish Policy Research is backing the idea of a Jewish channel which will be funded

largely by Jewish philanthropists. A spokesman for the IJPR said JTV was only one of several organisations that would be pitching for the channel. "There may be a jokey element but the general idea is to reflect and enhance Jewish culture within British society," he said. Mr Knobil said every significant community had its own satellite channel in Britain except the Jewish community.

"There is a lot of humour in what we are doing because Jews are very funny people. They have an insatiable appetite for news but also a very tragic history. But you have to have a great sense of humour to survive tragedy."

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Outside the school, on a piece of waste ground, a pile of fly-tipped rubbish had been hastily screened from the eyes of the Great by a makeshift

BY NICHOLAS WATT, POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT



Redwood: said Labour threatened golden legacy

His words failed to impress Conservatives, who called on

By FRANCES GIBB, LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

The move comes after Home Secretary Jack Straw said he would write to the Lodge — the governing body

"Our position is and always has been that no one has ever

POLITICAL SKETCH

passed without incident. The predominant feeling among this miscellany was one of a warmth, short of ecstasy. Only one of the audience proved insubordinate: a pensioners' representative, who, on being told pensioners would be helped "in the longer term," shouted: "Pensioners won't be here in the longer term." Blair took it with good grace.

We were reminded how well he handles these circuses. Mr Blair is a natural deadpan comic with ace timing. Referring sarcastically to the report-

We also noticed how Mr Blair's accent goes estuarial when speaking to the common people. Apart from an intensified reliance on "y'know" and "look!" (yesterday's y'know count was 33), he also begins to drop his r's in a pseudo-Cockney glottal-stop.

Number 10 — or Number 11." "Difficult questions to Number 10," grunted Mr Brown. "They'll probably get passed to Number 11, anyway," said Blair, determined to have the last word.



Tony Blair and Gordon Brown fielding questions at Geoffrey Chaucer School, Southwark, yesterday

Continued from page 1

gracious if he had apologised.

Francis Maude, the Shadow Culture Secretary, accused Mr Blair of hypocrisy after his past "sermonising" on sleaze and said he should at least offer a public apology. "The reality is, as he has been caught out, he should have the grace to apologise. But power has gone to his head, he is arrogant, he thinks he is above the rules and he doesn't need to apologise. It is not even as though it was an organisation where there was no possible political payback. It was only 12 months later that we were in the thick of the sleazy Formula One affair."

Mr Robathan said Mr Blair's letter to Sir Gordon

solve problems overnight." On pensions — no, we have not got all the problems right. But we have got extra help, by cutting VAT on fuel ... We know the overall destination [of the Government]. It is where you can combine that strong competitive entrepreneurial sense of achievement with a sense of decency and compassion and public service for all."

Mr Blair, who took off his jacket for the hour-long question and answer session in the school's assembly hall, was relaxed as he fielded questions from local people. Downing Street sent instructions for invitations to be sent to grassroots organisations, not to the "great and the good". The audience included members of the Salvation Army, pension-

Leading article, page 25

Continued from page 1

In an editorial commenting on the study, Anthony Milner, Professor of Neonatology and St Thomas's Hospital, London, says it is important to put the work into context.

British Airways, who fly more than 34 million passengers a year, say that there have been no recorded instances of sudden infant death during a flight. On the basis that one passenger in 500 is an infant, 750,000 babies would have flown as passengers over the past ten years and not one had died. Professor Milner writes.

Dr Southall says in a reply

While airlines do not advise pregnant women to fly, they are prepared to have babies as passengers no matter how young they are. The advice from the Aerospace Medical Association and the Air Transport Committee is that newborn babies should be able to fly quite safely. However they say it is prudent to wait for about a week after the birth.

The blockade of Calais, the fourth carried out by French seamen in 16 months, is in protest at plans to abolish duty-free sales throughout Europe. The port is due to reopen tomorrow morning at 5.45, although a spokesman for P&O Stena said that sailings from Dover would not restart until after 3pm.

British drivers are the safest and most polite in Europe, according to a survey by Uniroyal, the tyre manufacturer. Spanish drivers were said to be among the most dangerous, with Madrid motorists ignoring seven out of ten red lights and two thirds breaking speed limits. Nine out of ten drivers in Hamburg were found to ignore speed limits. The survey said that just one in ten London drivers drove through red lights and nine in ten stuck to parking laws.

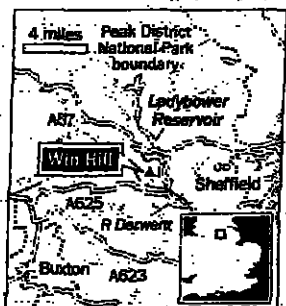
A Liverpool football fan who suffered brain damage during the Hillsborough disaster won damages of £1 million against South Yorkshire Police in a settlement agreed during a hearing at the High Court in Manchester. Robert Graham, now 25, of Skeimisdale, was crushed against fencing, spent five months in hospital, had long-term stays in two rehabilitation centres and still needs a full-time carer when his parents are not with him.

Telephone numbers in six areas of the United Kingdom will have to be changed again because of the increase in telephone connections. In April 2000, subscribers in Coventry, Portsmouth, Southampton, Cardiff and Northern Ireland will be given new area codes, all starting with "02" plus another digit. Londoners will face the second big change in seven years. The 0171 and 0181 codes are to be combined into an 020 code covering the whole capital.

A schoolgirl who spent £85 of her pocket money on four watercolours has been told by an expert from BBC Television's *Antiques Roadshow* that her investment is already worth about £8,000. Gemma Buckley, 14, from *Lewfich, Cheshire, who wants to be an antiques dealer*, decided she liked the works of Mabel Lucy Atwell after collecting postcards designed by her. The paintings have been stored in a bank.

The BBC board of governors should be accountable to licence fee-payers through a ballot, the head of the Institute of Public Policy Research, Gerry Hotham, argues in a pamphlet published by the centre-left think-tank today. Calling for a "People's Channel", Mr Hotham says that the corporation could be based on the idea of mutuality. "Payment of the licence fee could constitute membership of the BBC and the right to take part in elections to its board."

The Peak District National Park authority may be taken to court by a local environmentalists' group if it decides today to allow Severn Trent Water to quarry 400,000 tons of rock from Win Hill, close to Ladybower reservoir, within the park. The company, which owns the land, needs the rock to reinforce the reservoir's 50-year-old dam.



The Arts Council of England decided after months of debate to reduce its committee from 22 members to ten. Those departing include the theatre producer Thelma Holt and the poet Andrew Motion. The National Campaign for the Arts, which is among many who have campaigned for a stronger, slimmer committee, said: "With so many people on the council, they were having eight-hour meetings."

Magistrates granted an off-licence to allow the sale of alcohol from a shop on the Prince of Wales's Highgrove estate in Gloucester. The estate's own cider will be on sale at the shop, which will be open only for groups who have been conducted on tours. Lisa Croft, solicitor for the estate, said: "It is a rather unique operation. It is proposed to sell cider, two types of wine and bottles of champagne."

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How a clean look sent planners up the wall



Standing out: Mofakharul Shahin and the premises — still with the old name, First Image — at Islington in North London. He said: "Do they really want me to cover the brickwork with soot?"

By DAMIAN WHITWORTH

THE owner of a curry house wanted a clean look for his establishment, and a £100,000 renovation made it stand out. Now planners have told him that the brickwork no longer looks as weathered as the rest of the street, and must be treated with soot.

Mofakharul Shahin, 35, bought the premises in Chapel Market, Islington, North London, for £90,000. He said: "It had been derelict for six years. It was flooded with sewage, with rats and pigeons everywhere. We have taken a huge risk, but believed we could turn it into something which would contribute growth to the area."

He used bricks bought from a Victorian psychiatric hospital to renovate it in 19th-century style, and hopes to open in a couple of months. However, Islington council said last night that it had given planning permission on the understanding that he used weathered bricks, as the building was in a conservation area.

"It had to blend in with the rest of the terrace," said a spokeswoman. "One of the things we try to do in Islington is try and maintain a certain harmonious look. He ignored that. It doesn't matter where the bricks came from, they did not blend in."

She said that the council had written six months ago to tell him that he must comply with the conditions of the planning permission, and had suggested he use a soot-washing technique to achieve the required effect. She said it was hoped that a "middle way" could be found before the case ended up in court.

Mr Shahin said that council conservationists did not visit the property until after it was completed, despite requests from him to do so. "I just cannot believe it. I have spent a fortune restoring the building inside and out to its original 19th-century condition. But that is not good enough for the planners. They want it to be dirty and scruffy like other buildings in the street. Can they be serious? Do they really want me to go out and cover the brickwork with soot?"

He said that members of the public had praised the building's appearance: "What we have here is a few officials acting against the public interest."

Spitfire pilot who can't stop flying down the road

By MICHAEL HORSNELL

THE man with the worst regard for the 70mph limit emerged yesterday as a Second World War RAF fighter pilot who claims to have no appreciation of speed.

The thrill of taking control of a machine and thinking he is flying has led to 13 stretches in prison and eight life bans for Angus Black, 77.

Last night he was again grounded behind bars while on remand awaiting sentence for driving while disqualified, having no insurance and having a forged driving licence.

To the surprise of Carlisle magistrates, however, when Black appeared in court it was said that he could not recall previously going to prison or being banned.

He once told a court he never knew when he was speeding in his car because he was used to flying at 400mph in Spitfires. He has repeatedly promised to stop driving, but each time has been unable to resist the lure of life in the fast lane.



Black has already been sent to prison 13 times

In nearly all of the cases where he has been stopped, it has been for speeding.

In 1991 alone he received two life bans and fines of £2,700 for driving while disqualified, and an 18-month sentence, partially suspended, for another offence.

The former building site surveyor from Carlisle, Cumbria, is waiting to receive his latest sentence after pleading guilty.

The court was told that Black had been spotted behind the wheel of his C-registration Renault in February. He was released on bail after promising not to take to the road again, only to indulge once more. The bench adjourned the case for pre-sentence reports.

Alan Lovett, for the prosecution, said: "I am astonished he was ever granted bail the last time. He was released on bail after he promised magistrates he could be trusted and wouldn't drive again. But days later he was driving and here he is back in court."

John Smith, Black's solicitor, told the court: "My client cannot recall his previous disqualifications or the time spent in jail for breaking a ban."

Inspector Andy Gardner, head of Cumbria police's northern traffic unit, is no stranger to Black's antics. He could not comment specifically on the scores that the pensioner has become because of the impending sentencing. However, he said: "When a disqualified driver is involved in an accident, there are ramifications for everyone else, especially the large amount of money the other driver is likely to lose."

The police are aware of disqualified drivers and will take action against them, as this case has proved.

Black, whose home is filled with RAF mementoes, including a plaque with the inscription "Through the clouds we fly", would not comment.

The RAF was unable to find any trace in its records of Black, who often wears a Royal Air Force Association blue blazer.

ONE MAN'S TIME FOR SPEEDING

Angus Black, 77, has been found guilty of driving while disqualified, having no insurance and having a forged driving licence. He has been sentenced to 18 months in prison, with 12 months suspended, and a fine of £2,700. He has also been banned from driving for 18 months. Black has a long history of speeding offences. In 1973, he was fined for speeding. In 1974, he was fined for speeding. In 1975, he was fined for speeding. In 1976, he was fined for speeding. In 1977, he was fined for speeding. In 1978, he was fined for speeding. In 1979, he was fined for speeding. In 1980, he was fined for speeding. In 1981, he was fined for speeding. In 1982, he was fined for speeding. In 1983, he was fined for speeding. In 1984, he was fined for speeding. In 1985, he was fined for speeding. In 1986, he was fined for speeding. In 1987, he was fined for speeding. In 1988, he was fined for speeding. In 1989, he was fined for speeding. In 1990, he was fined for speeding. In 1991, he was fined for speeding. In 1992, he was fined for speeding. In 1993, he was fined for speeding. In 1994, he was fined for speeding. In 1995, he was fined for speeding. In 1996, he was fined for speeding. In 1997, he was fined for speeding. In 1998, he was fined for speeding.

Crown orders jury to clear killer driver

By KATHRYN KNIGHT

A JURY was told by the prosecution yesterday to acquit a disabled driver who killed a woman shopper and injured four others, one severely, when he lost control of his car.

Reginald Pull, 46, a multiple sclerosis sufferer, is thought to have had a muscle spasm which jammed his foot on the accelerator and caused his car to lurch out of control, killing Marlene Kemp, 60. He denies dangerous driving.

In an unusual legal move, the jury at Norwich Crown Court was told that it could not return a guilty verdict but had

to decide whether Mr Pull, from Shetland, Norfolk, was not guilty by reason of insanity or not guilty for another reason.

Richard Daniel, for the prosecution, said that it was enforcing a not-guilty verdict because the Crown aimed to prove that Mr Pull was legally insane when he set off. The multiple sclerosis had affected his brain so much that at times he did not realise he was a danger behind the wheel.

The court was told that Mr Pull, 46, had walked from his car to a charity shop and back in December 1996. The brief

excursion had caused him such pain that he was seen clawing his way back to his vehicle along a wall.

He had to be helped into his car by another motorist, Mr Daniel said. Soon after setting off, his Ford Fiesta mounted the pavement.

Mr Pull had gone to doctors more than 14 years ago because he was concerned about his driving. Multiple sclerosis was confirmed. The trial was not the forum to debate whether Mr Pull should have been legally entitled to drive, Mr Daniel said. The case continues today.

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Prison Service 'knew about assault claims'

THE Prison Service was warned last month about allegations that "a few unrestrained" officers could be abusing inmates at Wormwood Scrubs.

The alert was disclosed yesterday in a report by the Board of Visitors at the West London jail which said that allegations that some prison officers attacked inmates were "a principal area of concern".

As the report was released, 200 prison officers at the jail walked out in protest at a "lack of support from local management" over the allegations. They returned to work after being addressed by the deputy governor.

Last night the Prison Service appointed a new governor at the prison, which has 1,370 inmates. Stephen Moore, governor at Albany jail on the Isle of Wight, will take over in ten days. The prison has been without a main governor for four months.

A Prison Service inquiry is under way into "very serious" allegations that some prison officers assaulted and verbally abused eight prisoners at the

Watchdog's report at Wormwood Scrubs listed inmates' allegations of physical and verbal abuse by jail staff, writes Richard Ford

jail, including those held in the segregation unit.

The Board's report, brought forward by several weeks, stated that members were "seriously concerned at the possibility of a few unrestrained officers tainting the reputation of the majority of decent, dedicated staff".

It adds: "Some names crop up regularly in these allegations, and some staff have privately acknowledged to us that 'it goes on'." Inmates had complained about alleged abuse, but none of the complaints were upheld, the report says. "This may be the right conclusion in every case, but, because investigations are carried out internally, it supports the scuttlings of white-wash and collusion."

Rules governing strip searches and "restraints" were not being applied in the care and control unit that covered the segregation unit and cells for vulnerable prisoners. Only governors were supposed to authorise "temporary confinement and/or use of restraint", but this rule was not being consistently or appropriately applied, the report said.

No records were kept of strip searches, the report notes. Prisoners told the Board that "strip searches were carried out routinely, not exceptionally". The report says that these were all issues which tended to "fuel inmate belief that the segregation unit is a place where force is illicitly and habitually used".

The Board of Visitors published its report shortly after copies had been delivered to Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, and Joyce Quin, the Prisons Minister. It had been at the Prison Service since February 26, but the first ministers knew of the allegations was on Monday when Sir David Ramsbotham, the Chief Inspector of Prisons, informed them of a dossier of complaints delivered to him by solicitors acting for inmates.

A Prison Service spokesman said officials were still working on the report when the solicitors for the prisoners took the dossier to Sir David. Officials had not acted on the Board's warnings because there was no evidence, and investigations had not upheld the complaints.

Last night the local Prison Officers' Association branch described the allegations as "absolutely shameful". Duncan Keys, POA branch secretary at the jail, said: "As far as we can ascertain, they are based on supposition, innuendo and myth — everything except fact."



Stephen Moore will take over as Governor at Wormwood Scrubs next week

NEWS IN BRIEF

Waistline is a guide to health

A large waist can indicate poor health, researchers have concluded. A team led by Michael Lean of Glasgow University surveyed 12,000 men and women and found that men with a waist of more than 40 in and women with one of more than 35 in had a high likelihood of several disorders, including diabetes, shortness of breath, hypertension and high cholesterol.

Driver jailed

A driver charged with driving while his car was over the speed limit was jailed for three months after his car was found with two teenage girls in the passenger seat.

Appeal refused

Michael Austin, 42, from New Jersey, has been denied permission to appeal against his conviction for ordering a murder over a cigarette brand.

Winning voice

Two London speech therapists won more than £5,000 for their services after HBC Style Services withdrew a claim that their speech qualities were not good enough.

Over the moon

A scene of Whitty's birthday by moonlight, painted by John Atkinson, was sold for £199,500, double the estimate, at Bonhams in Knightsbridge.

CORRECTIONS

The first IVF clinic was set up privately at Bourne Hall, Cambridge, by Robert Edwards and Patrick Steptoe and not, as reported on March 5, by Lord Winston, who established the first IVF clinic in the NHS at Hammersmith Hospital.

Dr Malcolm Smith, a GP who cleared his name after being wrongly accused of sexually harassing a woman colleague, did not, contrary to a report on March 18, have to pay anything to the Medical Defence Union.

The statement by the group will be circulated to dons with a counter-statement signed by 52 members of the university. The controversy began when Herr Kohl's name was withdrawn from a list of nine due to receive honorary degrees in June. The ballot result will be declared on March 30.

Cambridge dons try to block Kohl award

By JOHN SHAW

A GROUP of Cambridge dons yesterday launched an attempt to block the award of an honorary degree to Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, on the ground that it might influence the forthcoming election in Germany.

The 11 objectors, mainly chemists, forced a postal vote of all the university's academics. They said the honour, at a ceremony less than 100 days before the German general election, could be construed as "active interference in the election process".

In a flysheet outlining their case, the academics said the proposed degree could suggest political bias. "The award of an honorary degree to any active campaigning politician, whatever his or her qualities, should be avoided. It is important that the University of Cambridge stands above party politics."

The statement by the group will be circulated to dons with a counter-statement signed by 52 members of the university. The controversy began when Herr Kohl's name was withdrawn from a list of nine due to receive honorary degrees in June. The ballot result will be declared on March 30.

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First women put in command of Navy warships

By MICHAEL EVANS
DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

THE Royal Navy ended a 400-year-old practice yesterday when it sent two women to sea as commanders of warships.

Women have never been allowed to rule the waves. Since Sir Francis Drake set sail against the Spanish armada in the 16th century and the Royal Navy was set up in 1660 under Charles II, commanders have been men.

Yesterday Lieutenant Suzanne Moore, 26, and Lieutenant Melanie Robinson, 29, took command of two of the Navy's fast training boats from male counterparts.

Lieutenant Moore, from Bath, took command of HMS Dasher in Portsmouth, and Lieutenant Robinson, from Pembroke, assumed command of HMS Express at Troon in Ayrshire, where the vessel has just completed a maintenance period.

Although there are a number of women in the Royal Navy with the rank of lieutenant-commander, they have been appointed to non-command posts. In December last year, Lieutenant-Commander Vanessa Spiller, 33, became the first female principal warfare officer.



Lieutenant Robinson joined Navy in 1993

In their command roles, Lieutenants Moore and Robinson will each be in charge of one officer, two senior ratings, two junior ratings and 12 students learning seamanship.

Lieutenant Moore will take charge of the Bristol University Royal Naval unit, and Lieutenant Robinson the Cardiff University unit.

Lieutenant Moore was previously navigating officer of the Type 22 frigate HMS Chatham, which has been on patrol in the Gulf. She also served as navigating officer of the Type 23 frigate HMS Sutherland and as officer of

the watch in the Type 22 frigate HMS Sheffield. She joined the Navy in 1992 after graduating from Leeds University.

Lieutenant Robinson has served as navigating officer of the fishery protection vessel HMS Sheldan and as officer of the watch in the Type 22 frigate HMS Brave. A graduate of the University of Wales, she joined the Navy in 1993. Her husband, Lieutenant-Commander Guy Robinson, takes command of the fishery protection vessel HMS Guernsey next month.

A Royal Navy spokesman said: "The appointments of the first female commanding officers clearly demonstrates the Royal Navy's commitment to full integration of women wherever possible, and the availability of the same career opportunities as their male counterparts."

Women were first allowed to serve at sea in September 1990 and the formal integration of women into the Royal Navy was announced in November 1993, when the Women's Royal Naval Service ceased to exist.

There are about 700 women serving at sea and a decision is expected before the end of the year on whether to allow women to serve on board submarines.



Lieutenant Moore after taking command of HMS Dasher yesterday

Manager is jailed for raping staff

By SIMON DE BRUXELLES

A MANAGER was jailed for 11 years yesterday for raping two women and threatening them with the sack if they complained.

Martin Bristow, who was in charge of 20 staff, forced a woman to perform sexual acts against her will for nearly a year before she finally quit. The married father-of-two then forced himself on another woman who had been given the job.

Bristow, 27, carried out the sex attacks after telling the women: "It's time for your extra duties."

Judge Peter Jacobs told Bristow: "You propositioned and bullied them. You said you were the boss and they must do as they were told."

"Their lot was one of total misery. You treated them with arrogance, seeing them as little more than sexual objects. In your time as manager you propositioned many women staff causing them to leave."

He told the manager that he had treated the two victims with "cruelty and contempt."

"You took advantage of a woefully inadequate system and instigated a regime of harassment and bullying."

Paul Lewis, for the prosecution, told Cardiff Crown Court "Each was indecently touched, sexually assaulted and eventually raped by a man who used

his authority over them. He abused his position as the employer, subjecting these two women to a catalogue of degradation."

The first woman said: "I really didn't want anything to do with this man. But I just didn't want to lose my job."

"I was scared and he would just be laughing. He kept telling me it was what I wanted but I was disgusted."

The assaults happened up to 30 times before he raped her. She said: "I was too frightened to complain. I didn't anyone would believe me and I would lose my job."

After Bristow raped her a second time, nine months later, she left the company but she remained silent about the attacks. Another woman took her job, and Bristow soon began to grope her.

The second victim said: "I thought about reporting it, but nobody ever saw it happen. I had only been working there a month and he'd been there for years. I was scared nobody would believe me."

Bristow raped her when they were alone in the office.

She reported him while he was on holiday, and he was arrested and charged. Bristow, of Newport, Gwent, denied the sex attacks but was convicted of three rapes and four indecent assaults.

London's most prolific armed robbers jailed

By LIN JENKINS

THE ringleader of a gang described by police as the most violent and prolific armed robbers in London was jailed for 20 years yesterday after two of his team gave evidence against him.

James Phillips, nicknamed Ayatollah, masterminded a series of up to 100 armed raids netting more than £2 million in cash and jewels by intimidating people into carrying out his crimes. None of the money has been traced. He also devised a plot to take an assassination attempt on Sir Paul McCartney in order to get a large reward for rescuing him.

Phillips, 47, of Greenwich, southeast London, was being sentenced at the Old Bailey after being convicted of six robberies and six firearms offences.

Also sentenced were his girlfriend Christine Clapp-Smith, 48, also of Greenwich,

who was convicted last year for her part in two jewellery shop raids; Michael Carey, 42, from Wales; and Christopher Daniell, 41, from Norfolk.

Detective Chief Inspector Trevor Heard of the Metropolitan Police Flying Squad said that the gang had been the most prolific violent robbers to operate in the capital in recent years and that ten of them had now been jailed for a total of 93 years.

Daniell, a former employee of London Underground, had his sentence reduced by 11 years to seven having pleaded guilty and turning Queen's evidence.

Carey received similar reduction and was sentenced to five years.

Clapp-Smith, who was suffering depression and deeply scared of Phillips, was jailed for three years after the judge told her that he was showing mercy.

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BSE scientist 'fobbed off' by officials

Head of first advisory committee says delay was like a plot from Yes, Prime Minister, writes Michael Hornsby

THE scientist who headed the first advisory committee on "mad cow" disease told colleagues that he felt as if he was taking part in a *Yes, Prime Minister* plot in his dealings with government departments.

David Tyrrell, director of the Medical Research Council's Common Cold Unit, accused officials of "fobbing him off" when he asked to know when his committee's report, setting out research priorities for combating the epidemic, would be published, the BSE inquiry was told yesterday.

The Tyrrell Committee was set up in February 1989, and submitted its recommendations to the Ministry of Agriculture and the Department of Health four months later. But the report was not published until January 1990. In a letter marked "in confidence" to Katherine Levy, of the Medical Research Council, in December 1989, Dr Tyrrell stated: "It certainly leaves a bad taste to have been involved in something which would have done well as an outline plot for an episode of *Yes, Prime Minister*."



Tyrrell: he said delay by officials left a bad taste

written evidence, Dr Tyrrell said that there had been "no precise agreement" on how the committee's report would be handled, but that members had expected that it would be published.

"Members did feel some frustration when it was still not released by the end of the year," he said. "We understood later that this was done

so that, at the time of publication, it could be announced that all the research was being funded."

He said his committee had been concerned by "the limited numbers of experts in the disciplines necessary for a comprehensive research programme on TSEs [transmissible spongiform encephalopathies] and the lack of suitable facilities for large-scale animal experimentation in strict containment."

It was fortunate, he said, that scientists with knowledge of scrapie in sheep, thought to be the source of BSE, were still available at the Neuropathogenesis Unit in Edinburgh. Answering questions from the inquiry panel, headed by Sir Nicholas Phillips, a Court of Appeal judge, Dr Tyrrell defended the value of an experiment carried out by the Central Veterinary Laboratory to test the extent of maternal transmission of BSE from cows to their calves. Other scientists have criticised it as seriously flawed because some of the calves might have eaten contaminated feed, making it impossible to tell for certain

BRITAIN CANNOT BAN VEAL CALF EXPORTS, COURT RULES

FROM CHARLES BLOOMER IN BRISTOL

BRITAIN has no right under European Union law to ban the export of five calves to states where they are reared in veal crates, the European Court of Justice ruled yesterday. Any national export ban would breach the rules of the European single market, and this could not be overridden by claims for an exemption under an article of the Treaty of Rome on public morality and animal welfare, the court said.

The High Court had sought a ruling from the Luxembourg court in 1995 after the outcry over the practice of raising calves in tiny crates to ensure the

business of their meat. Britain banned veal crates in 1990, but the Commission in 1991 found that the British ban was discriminatory against the export of calves to other EU countries which continued to use the veal crates. The group of five calves, which were sent to the Netherlands, were raised in veal crates. If EU law cannot protect the welfare of young animals, it is a time when laws were changed to ensure that calves were raised in conditions that would allow them to be humanely treated.

No calves have been shipped from the United Kingdom since 1990, when the ban was introduced. The ban was based on the fact that the EU had agreed this week to ease the ban on veal crates. The ban was based on the fact that the EU had agreed this week to ease the ban on veal crates.

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experiment would have been delayed for several years. If it had been delayed, and material transmission had turned out to be happening on a large scale, that would have required a different strategy for controlling the disease.

Completing the selective cull of cattle at risk of developing "mad cow" disease was proving difficult because of

inadequate records. Jeff Rooker, the Food Safety Minister, told the Commons. He said 67,000 cattle had been culled so far. Up to another 18,000 would need to be culled, of which 10,000 had so far been traced. The task was "made more difficult by the lack of the computerised cattle tracing system which we are now developing."

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£35m is spent on pupils' convenience

BY JOHN O'LEARY
EDUCATION EDITOR

PAY REFORMS

CHILDREN at the last 600 schools in England with outside lavatories will be spared the sometimes icy trek after they were allocated £35 million of the Chancellor's extra cash for education yesterday.

David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, said he was dedicating more than a third of the extra money set aside for schools to ending the "scandal" of outside lavatories. "Tens of thousands of children have to go outside to use facilities that often date back to the Victorian age. That is simply unacceptable in the last years of the 20th century."

Mr Blunkett reserved a further £15 million to update inefficient heating systems in 500 schools. Another £40 million will be used to build classrooms to help primary schools meet the Government's pledge to reduce class sizes to a maximum of 30 pupils.

The Government had already pledged £1.3 billion over the course of the Parliament to tackle the backlog of school repairs. The Budget provided another £250 million for education, half of which will go on projects to improve the skills of adults in the workforce.

Most of the schools with outside lavatories are primary schools in the south-west of England. Many have been campaigning for years to modernise their facilities, but their local authorities have had no capital funds.

The announcement was welcomed by teachers' leaders. Doug McAwoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said more than £3 billion was needed. "Our surveys have shown the hazards that outside toilets and inadequate heating create for pupils' safety and education. Every winter, schools have to be closed because their

Teachers should have shorter holidays and performance-related pay, Margaret Hodge, the Labour MP who chairs the Commons Select Committee on Education, will tell academics today. In a speech to the National Primary Teacher Education Conference, Mrs Hodge will call for teachers' contracts to be renegotiated and a change to the structure of the school year. She will say that it is unfair for teachers to be rewarded only for time served, not for success in their work. Teachers could be paid according to results, with a proportion based on appraisal, inspection findings and pupils' improvement, she will suggest.

heating systems have broken down, or children are off sick because they have contracted diseases that flourish in outside toilets."

Every local authority will be required to set targets for reducing the number of children excluded from school, as part of a Government initiative launched yesterday to force schools to tackle classroom disruption.

Estelle Morris, the junior Education Minister, announced that every area would publish a behaviour support plan, detailing arrangements for educating disruptive pupils. Parents, police and social services would be involved in tackling poor behaviour.

More than 12,500 pupils are expelled from school each year.

Education, page 49

Lone-parent figures soar

BY ALEXANDRA FREAN, SOCIAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

THE number of children in lone-parent households has risen by a third in the Nineties, according to government statistics. More than one child in five — a total of 2.7 million — now grows up without two parents in the home.

The figures, published by the Office for National Statistics, show that the shape of family life in Britain has altered radically within the space of a generation. In 1971 just 8 per cent of families with children had a lone parent, compared with 22 per cent in 1995, the latest year for which figures were available.

The findings will strike a chord with Labour policymakers as they try to reduce welfare dependency and move single parents off benefits and into work. Benefits paid to lone parents have soared in the Nineties and now account for £10.8 billion of the social security budget of £96 billion.

John Haskay, author of the research, said that the sharp

increase in the number of single-parent families began in 1986. At the same time, the number of children growing up in one-parent households started to rise faster than the number of single-parent families because more lone mothers were deciding to expand their families while still single.

He noted that the number of never-married lone mothers had now overtaken the number of divorced lone mothers. Fifteen per cent of single mothers have never married or lived with the parent of their child. A further 17 per cent had lived with the father.

Although single mothers outnumber lone fathers by ten to one, the proportion of single-parent households headed by men who never married rose from 4 to 11 per cent between 1971 to 1996. They now account for about 10,600 single-parent households. "This is a phenomenon that we need to know more about," Mr Haskay said.

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'Hideous' fashions earn fury of Joan Collins

By Emma Wilkins

JOAN COLLINS yesterday criticised the "trendy hideousness" seen at fashion collections and accused designers of treating women with contempt.

Ms Collins has written an article in *The Spectator* which leaves readers in no doubt about her trenchant views. "Many style gurus must loathe women — not the anorectic, androgynous teenagers who stalk the catwalks like heroin addicts in search of a fix, but real women with real bodies," she writes.

"The contempt for us is so glaringly obvious that it is amazing that so many women allow themselves to buy into it."

Editors of glossy magazines do not escape Ms Collins's barbs. They encourage women to "emulate extra-terrestrials or decadent vagabonds, photographed in transparent dresses which, if worn in public, would result in the wearer being arrested for indecent exposure."

"I have watched these dictatorial ladies of fashion at the collections, dressed in the height of trendy hideousness: gose-pimpled bare legs in sandals, droopy cardies trimmed with frayed velvet, shapeless coats with many faux-fur collars, or black, black, endless boring black."

The fashion scene is "nothing like the 1950s, when Ms Collins was a girl. Standards of style have deteriorated rapidly in the past decade, and shabby chic and frump fashion have been tolerated as the way to go. Like lambs led to the slaughter, too many women have fallen for it."

"Coco Chanel and Christian Dior must be turning a paler shade of pink in their graves."

Collins says style gurus despise women



A European beaver swimming in a pond in Latvia: it was popular in Britain for its fur and a pain-killing chemical. This time it would be a protected species

The return of a long-lost friend

The beaver vanished from Britain 400 years ago. Now it may be restored if landowners can be persuaded it is harmless, writes Shirley English

WILD beavers may return to Britain for the first time in four centuries. A programme to introduce them into Scottish lochs and rivers could begin within three years.

Scientists at Scottish Natural Heritage have identified suitable habitats along Loch Lomond and the rivers Dee, Don, Spey and Ness. A four-month consultation scheme was launched yesterday to test public opinion.

The European beaver (*Castor fiber*), the continent's largest indigenous rodents, are likely to be imported from Scandinavia. If they adapt successfully, Scotland could be supporting up to 1,000 in 50 years' time, in line with a European habitat directive to increase biodiversity.

The beaver was once widespread across Britain and dates back at least 8,000 years, according to archaeological evidence. As early as 1424, it had disappeared from a parliamentary list of fur-bearing animals upon which tolls were due. By the end of the 16th century, it is believed to have been hunted to extinction for its pelt and the medicinal properties of a gland under its tail, which acted like a natural aspirin.

Although the evidence of its demise is largely anecdotal, archives place the last recorded sighting with Bishop Hec-



The *Castor fiber*: nothing like the Canadian model

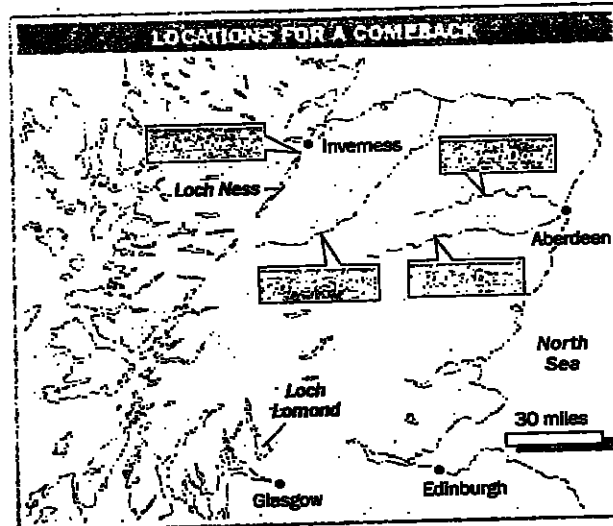
tor Boece, the first principal of Aberdeen University. In his 1527 account of the history of Scotland, *Scotorum Historiae*, he claimed that beaver could be found in the environs of Loch Ness. However, in 1684, Sir Robert Sibbald, author of *Scotia Illustrata*, said he was no longer sure if the species still survived.

Since the 1920s, indigenous beaver have been successfully reintroduced in 14 European countries, but this is the first time official attempts have been made to bring back such a large mammal to Britain. Scientists were anxious yesterday to assuage the fears of landowners, timber growers, farmers and angling interests that the European beaver's behaviour was markedly different to the larger "lumber-jack" Canadian beaver (*C. canadensis*) — known for felling large trees and build-

ing huge dams. The European beaver is entirely vegetarian. It does not even eat fish. Its diet consists of grass, herbs and aquatic plants in summer, switching to the bark of broad-leaved trees, such as willow, aspen and birch, in winter. It avoids conifers.

It lives beside lochs and slow-moving rivers and streams, bordered by woodland, but rarely ventures more than 100 yards from the water's edge. It fells small trees and build dams and lodges only if the water is too low to cover the entrance to its burrow. Scottish Natural Heritage wants to reintroduce up to ten beaver every year for five years, starting in 2001.

The mammals, which will be protected, will be left to breed and expand naturally, although population growth and their impact on the environment will be closely moni-



our work over the years to diversify woodland has made a suitable habitat possible."

If the public approve the plan, a recommendation to reintroduce the beaver will be made to government ministers. Magnus Magnusson, SNH chairman, welcomed

what he predicted would be a vigorous debate on the issue, but said: "We are only talking about beaver and not other large mammals. We have no plans to reintroduce wolves, bears, or mammoths."

Leading article, page 25

NEWS IN BRIEF

Doctor used own drugs for suicide

A senior anaesthetist who used his own drugs to kill himself was worried about changes in his work, an inquest was told. Sami Fouad, 50, an Egyptian national, was found in a lavatory at Pinderfields Hospital, Wakefield, in December with a drip in the back of his hand. Trudi Fouad, his widow, said she believed he was making a cry for help. Verdict: suicide.

Death chase

Vera Hipkies, 64, collapsed and died after she joined her husband, Reginald, 67, chasing a gang of youths who were hurling bricks at the couple's new Regis, West Midlands.

Bodies return

The bodies of Roy and Judith Eccles, who were murdered at their retirement home on the Greek island of Cephalonia, were flown back to Britain. Two Albanian men have been arrested.

Dead bird plea

The Universities Federation for Animal Welfare in Wheatthampstead, Hertfordshire, is appealing for people to post it dead song thrushes for use in an investigation into the decline of the species.

Pupils expelled

Three boys aged 15, 16 and 17 have been expelled from St Paul's School in Barnes, southwest London, for involvement in taking cannabis. Stephen Baldock, High Master of the school, said.

Coming clean

A bus company apologised after a driver took unscheduled detours through an automatic wash. Passengers in Norwich complained when the No 24 went through the wash every morning for a week.

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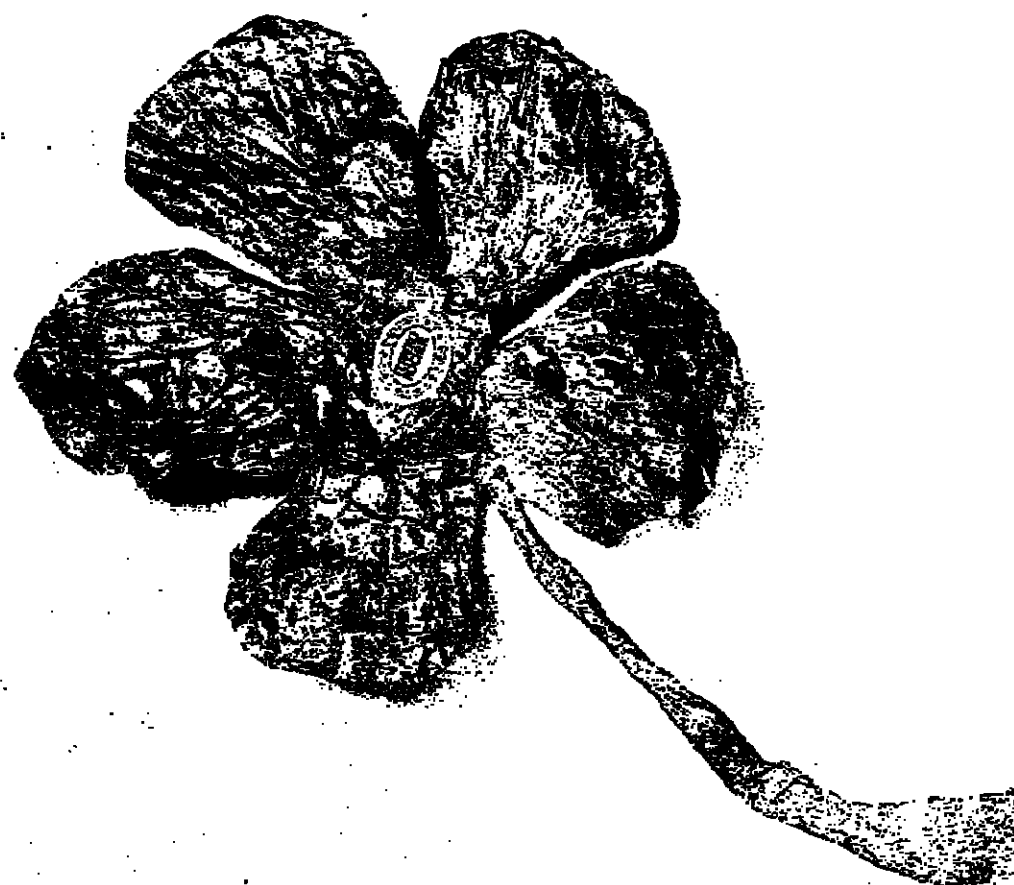
By Kathryn Knight

MORE commonly associated with a mind-altering substance, a plant from the cannabis family is today launched as a body-altering substance.

The Body Shop is introducing a range that contains hemp seed oil, said to have beneficial moisturising effects. Industrial hemp, the basis of the new range, belongs to the plant family *Cannabis sativa*, as does cannabis leaf and resin, but contains only a tiny percentage of THC, the mind-altering substance associated with the drug. But in case there is any doubt of the ingredient's derivation, each product is stamped with a picture of the distinctive cannabis leaf.

Miss Roddick advocates the decriminalisation of the drug. Yesterday a spokeswoman for the Body Shop denied that the new range could promote the use of cannabis. "Hemp has fantastic moisturising properties, which have just not been harnessed in this way before," she said. "It is one of the most environmentally friendly products worldwide. It requires minimal use of pesticides and fertilisers and is very low maintenance."

In a statement, Ms Roddick compared vilifying hemp to condemning potatoes because they were used to make vodka. "Buying our product is no more an endorsement of drug use than wearing a poppy on poppy day is an endorsement of opium use," she said.



MARCH 22nd. THIS MOTHER'S DAY, SAY IT WITH FERRERO ROCHER.

Jets will land where man lived for 6,000 years

Site for runway yields nomads' artefacts and a Bronze Age farm, reports

Russell Jenkins

WORKING under the roar of jets, archaeologists have uncovered a Bronze Age farmstead on the site of Manchester Airport's second runway. Pieces of pottery, brooches, coins, knife blades and arrowheads show that the gravel ridge above the Bollin Valley in Cheshire has been home to human beings almost continuously for 6,000 years.

The inhabited history of the site stretches from the Mesolithic period to the 17th century. A team of 15 archaeologists, in a race against the clock, have found a large number of worked flint fragments, provisionally dated 4000 BC, revealing Mesolithic man to be a classic hunter-gatherer.

The ploughed soil has turned up pottery fragments from Roman Britain and a brooch dating from the 2nd century. The most "modern" finds — on the site of an 18th-century farmhouse — have been a James II coin and a 17th-century silver buckle.

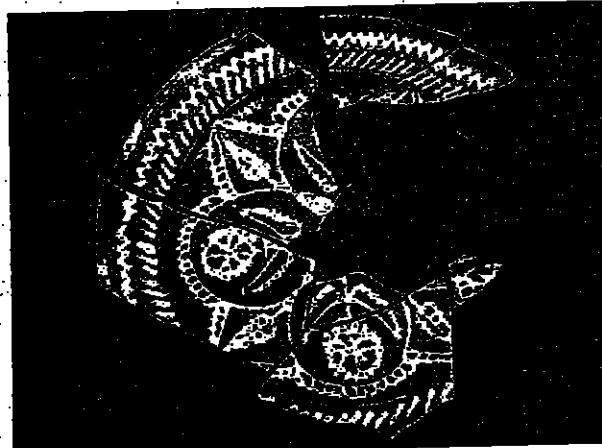
The Bronze Age farmstead is the most important discovery. Robina McNeil, the county archaeologist, hailed the discovery as the first of its kind in the North West and a site of major national importance.

The archaeologists must complete their investigation of the 2.75-acre site by Easter, when it is scheduled to be buried. Once the artefacts have been rescued, the ridge will be covered by millions of tonnes of concrete for the controversial runway.

The investigations were ordered as a result of the planning inquiry. Manchester Airport, which is funding the £100,000 project, and the



Archaeologists excavating the site of Manchester Airport's second runway. Finds range from copper tweezers dating between 1500 and 1800 BC to fragments of medieval pottery, below



quernstone confirms that Bronze Age man farmed arable land as well as keeping cattle and sheep.

There are also pottery fragments from the Beaker period, from 2700-1800 BC. These semi-settled people, the first to work with metal, would bury their dead alongside highly decorated vessels. Archaeologists have provi-

sionally dated a pair of copper tweezers to between 1500 and 1800 BC.

The 18th-century house was called Oversley Farm. The name was a corruption of the Saxon for Wulfic's Wood. Wulfic of Wilmslow was recorded in the Domesday Book as a landowner. Archaeologists found medieval pottery in the soil.

Archives are bursting as past catches up with the present

By Nigel Hawkes, Science Editor

BRITAIN'S past is being stripped bare at breakneck speed by a combination of a change in planning law and new technology.

Where once there were a handful of archaeologists dependent on limited public funds, today there are hundreds, funded by developers and armed with sophisticated methods for detecting, dating and identifying artefacts.

In 1984, according to Geoffrey Wainwright, English Heritage's chief archaeologist, there were 1,000 excavations in England. Ten years later, the figure had risen to 2,500, largely as a result of new planning guidance which obliges developers to assess the archaeological value of a site and to finance a dig if anything is likely to be found.

The speed with which new finds are being made worries some archaeolo-

gists, who say that quantity is being substituted for quality. The obligation laid on developers to finance digs means that many are undertaken, but what is found may be poorly recorded and interpreted. There are also serious difficulties with finding places to store or display all the artefacts dug up.

The Museum of London has run out of storage space. Warehouses in Islington and Hackney are full, as is the museum's own archive. Simon Thurley, the museum's director, said: "I regard it as an absolute disaster."

The museum now has 1.1 million objects, 265 pallets loaded with stone-work, 4,000 tubs of environmental samples, and 120,000 shoeboxes of finds awaiting analysis. Dr Wainwright argues that these finds provide the basis for research and scholarship in the future.

The country has been occupied

continuously since the ice retreated 10,000 years ago, so there is plenty to be found. New geophysical techniques enable traces of past occupation to be found without even turning a sod.

A classic example was the discovery of a giant wooden temple, or wood-henge, at Stanton Drew in Somerset last year. In a matter of days, the lay-out of the wooden henge was revealed by measuring small magnetic anomalies in the soil. No wood remained, yet the soil bore the traces of where it had once been, showing the outline of a huge temple from 3,000BC.

The new discoveries have increased respect for the people of prehistoric Britain. Far from living a primitive existence, they were miners, farmers, foresters and builders, with an established social structure and enough prosperity and organisation to create monuments such as Stanton Drew.

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Terrorists issue threat to Maze prison officers

THE Loyalist Volunteer Force threatened "direct action" against prison officers at the Maze last night if any of its 30 inmates were mistreated after the murder of David Keys in his cell last weekend.

The terrorist group issued its threat as at least ten LVF suspects were being questioned about the murder at Belfast's Castlereagh interrogation centre. Keys, one of four men charged with the murders of Philip Allen and Damien Trainor in the village of Poyntpass on March 3, was beaten and strangled in the LVF wing of H-Block 6.

The Maze faced fresh controversy after one of its prison officers claimed the top-security prison was "out of control". The officer suggested that the terrorist inmates ran the prison using mobile phones to communicate with civil servants at Stormont. He predicted more killings of inmates or staff, saying guns

Martin Fletcher reports on a danger signal as inmates are questioned on Keys murder

could be "rife" inside the prison because there were no proper body searches. He talked of prisoners openly having sex with visitors and holding parties with drinks and drugs.

The anonymous officer's claims were broadcast using an actor's voice on Radio 4's *Today* programme, and sparked an instant outcry. Adam Ingram, Northern Ireland's Security Minister, called them "sensationalist

nonsense". Prison Service sources said officers were "spinning stories" because they were unhappy about recent cutbacks. Finlay Spratt, chairman of the Northern Ireland Prison Officers' Association, decried the interview, saying it contained "a lot of fiction", and denied the Maze was out of control.

Mike Donkin, the BBC reporter who acquired the interview, insisted his source was an experienced officer who offered "an authoritative view of what was going on".

The interview was damaging because it compounded the impression of anarchy within the Maze. Prior to Keys's murder, republican inmates had shot dead Billy Wright, the LVF leader, and an IRA murderer had escaped in women's clothes after a Christmas party.

On Monday Sir David Ramsbotham, Chief Inspector of Prisons in England and



Officers at the Maze prison: a radio report that the jail was "out of control" was swiftly denied yesterday. An inquiry begins on Monday

Wales, begins an inquiry into the running of the Maze. The Government is also about to publish a report by Martin Narey, director of prison regimes in England and Wales, on December's security lapses, but Andrew Mackay,

the shadow Northern Ireland Secretary, reiterated his call for a full independent inquiry. Ken Maginnis, the Ulster Unionist Party's security spokesman, demanded action to reassert control in the jail. Mr Ingram said that mobile

phones did not work in the Maze. The prison has electronic jamming equipment, but a spokesman refused to elaborate. The minister dismissed the anonymous officer's claims, but argued that the authorities had to co-

operate with the inmates so prison officers themselves were not directly threatened. Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, and Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary, expressed their "absolute determination" to achieve an

agreement at the Stormont peace talks within the next few weeks, and promised "intensified contacts" with the eight participating parties and the Irish Government. London wants an agreement in principle by Easter.

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Keepers who face a daily regime of intimidation

■ Cuts in pay and loss of professional pride make it harder for Maze staff to cope with death threats to themselves and their families, reports Martin Fletcher

AFTER Loyalist Volunteer Force prisoners burnt their two H-block wings in the Maze last August, they dangled a message for their prison officers on an outer wall: "Watch your houses, boys".

Threats and intimidation are a regular part of a prison officer's life in the Maze, home to 500 dedicated and ingenious terrorists and probably Europe's most dangerous prison. Inmates make a point of telling them that they know where they live, or where their children go to school, or what a nice new car they have just bought.

These threats are called "conditioning" and are not made idly. Since the Troubles began, 29 Northern Ireland prison officers have been killed. One was stabbed during the mass escape of 1983 but the others were murdered outside jail in their homes, in bars, leaving church.

Prison officers are overwhelmingly Protestant, but unlike Northern Ireland's police they are targeted by both republicans and loyalists. Six were killed after terrorists had their special-category status removed in the mid-1970s and ten during the republican blanket protest of 1980. Last summer, the LVF attacked prison officers' homes with guns and petrol bombs after its prisoners claimed that they were being denied certain rights.

Earlier this year, the Irish National Liberation Army threatened to attack officers' homes unless three INLA prisoners accused of murdering Billy Wright, the LVF leader, were returned to the Maze from Maghaberry prison. Merely to lodge a complaint about a prisoner is to invite an attack from his colleagues outside.

The officers' direct contact with prisoners inside the Maze is limited to one cell check and head count a day, and to searches when they leave their blocks. Otherwise the officers sit behind two metal grilles in the crossbar of the H-blocks.

In Northern Ireland's four main prisons, however, there were 36 assaults on prison officers last year and in April two INLA inmates in Maghaberry failed to kill an officer only because their gun jammed. Wright's murder showed there are guns inside the Maze too.

There are 1,220 officers at the Maze and about 2,700 across the Province. They do not advertise their profession. They tend to stick together. The Prison Service provides security measures for their homes if they are deemed at risk, and if necessary helps them to move. It also provides psychological help and counselling.

The job is fraught and

dangerous but requires qualifications, and the significantly higher than of British prison officer with 15 years' experience earns £25,500 for a week, a good salary in Northern Ireland. Until recently could supplement the generous overtime.

lies one of the sources of officers' discontent. The cost per prisoner in Northern Ireland is a year, three times higher in England and Wales account for 91 per cent of service's running cost two decades in which Northern Ireland's security was virtually limitless. Government began back in the 1990s. It was ended in 1995, placed by days in lieu, years, more than 400 jobs have disappeared.

The other problem is professional pride. Authorities admit that



Spratt says staff used like messengers

run the Maze only with prisoners' co-operation officers secure the perimeter but the inmates run the Maze. The officers are accompanied on twice-daily checks by wing's "commanding" and rarely prevail confrontation.

"Our members are message boys," Finlay chairman of the Prison Officers' Association, said sometimes they, not if omers, who feel they are time. As the peace process advanced they have seen prisoners receive more concessions.

Life has never been so for the inmates, says Mr Spratt, but "the security of prison" has gone down the drain. Management retorts if officers' jobs would be difficult and dangerous prisoners were unhappy

Psycho clear to con

Scotland ideal govt

into the

Psychological tests clear man pressed to confess murder

Other convictions could be challenged, reports Peter Foster

A MAN who spent 15 years in jail for a murder he did not commit had his conviction quashed by the Court of Appeal yesterday.

John Roberts was an impressionable 19-year-old when he confessed to the murder of Daniel Sands, who was shot in the head with a .410 shotgun and buried in an orchard. The conviction was overturned yesterday after psychiatric tests showed that Mr Roberts was vulnerable to making false confessions and had been denied proper access to a solicitor during his interviews.

After the hearing Mr Roberts, now 35, said that police had pressed him for more than two hours to admit the crime after his arrest in March 1982. "Basically, the police really intimidated me and badgered me constantly. No matter what I said they were saying something else. I really gave up, as no one was listening."

In a 30-page judgment, Lord Justice Henry said the conviction, which relied solely on Mr Roberts's confession, was unsafe. "Had the new psychiatric and psychological evidence been before the court, the trial judge would have been bound to exclude the evidence of the confessions and, without that evidence, there was no case to go before the jury."

"Medical science and the law have moved a long way since 1982. We hope that the safeguards now in place will prevent others becoming



Daniel Sands was shot in the head at his Shropshire farm

victims of similar miscarriages of justice," he said.

The case is one of the first in which contemporary standards have been applied retrospectively. A member of Mr Roberts's legal team said that the judgment could mean re-examination of many other confession-only convictions.

At the trial in 1983, the Crown used Mr Roberts's confession to prove that he had shot Mr Sands at the instigation of Richard Evans, his co-accused, who was jailed for

the murder. In the confession Mr Roberts admitted he was at Barleycorn Farm in Grinshill, Shropshire, when Mr Sands was shot, but denied killing him. Mr Roberts and Evans both worked at the farm on a casual basis.

According to interview notes, Mr Roberts initially confessed to agreeing with a suggestion from Evans that they should kill the farmer for his money, although he said he was drunk at the time. He admitted that he had driven to the farm and pointed a gun at Mr Sands while he was bending over a petrol tank, but said his nerve had failed. The next day, Mr Roberts said, they buried the body in the orchard and searched the house for money. But he denied the killing.

However, after nearly six hours of denials, he agreed to police suggestions that he had carried out the killing and confessed.

At the trial at Shrewsbury Crown Court, he retracted the original confession, admitting that he had helped to bury Mr Sands, but denying being present at the killing. In his evidence, he said that the pressure of constant police questioning had made him confess. He told the jury: "I did say I did it, I shot him, but I said that because they kept on and they were going to make me admit it, whether I had done it or not, and I thought I may as well admit it."

Mr Roberts appealed against his



John Roberts leaving the High Court yesterday with his mother, Rose, after winning his appeal

conviction in 1984, but it was dismissed. He was successful this time because of a psychiatric report carried out in 1994 by Bryony Moore, a clinical psychologist with expertise in what the judges describe as "the emerging field of science relating to the phenomenon

of false confessions". She found that Mr Roberts was an "exceptionally compliant individual at the time of his confession... and, as a child, often took the blame for things he had not done".

West Mercia police, who investigated the murder, said yesterday

that they would be studying the judgment carefully to see if any lessons could be learnt. However, they added that the introduction of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act since the case had provided safeguards for people who were accused of crimes.

Gay ads aid drive for police recruits

By PAUL WILKINSON

POLICE believe that a recruitment advertisement in a gay magazine earned them £1 million worth of free publicity.

The advertisements placed in *Gay Times* by the South Yorkshire force were criticised by some officers, but they excited interest from all over Britain, as well as the United States, Australia, Germany and South Africa.

Some officers claimed that the advertisements, featuring Constable Tom Goodhill, a former recruiting officer, made the force a laughing stock. Detective Constable Dave Bullett wrote an open letter saying he was "ashamed and embarrassed", but Richard Wells, the Chief Constable, backed the campaign.

PC Goodhill, whose offer to resign when the row broke out was rejected, said yesterday: "We wanted to go that extra mile to show that we were happy to recruit from all sections of the community."

Lynda Scott, for the force, said: "It is difficult to say if we have recruited any gay police officers as a result of the adverts, because we don't categorise applicants in that way. There was certainly a huge amount of interest."

Scotland Yard finds ideal good neighbour

By TIM JONES

A LIVELY little animal peering round a policeman's helmet yesterday helped Scotland Yard to relaunch the Neighbourhood Watch scheme as a method of involving the community in fighting crime in the capital.

Sir Paul Cadden, the Commissioner, said that a month-long advertising campaign featuring the meerkat was designed to encourage communities uniting to help each other. Meerkats had been chosen, he said, because it is their instinct to work as teams, to be alert to protect each other and to give warning of anything suspicious or threatening.

Although there are more than 12,000 Neighbourhood Watch schemes in the Metropolitan Police area, they are overwhelmingly in the suburbs. The force hopes to encourage more of them in the



The campaign logo

inner city. Sir Paul said: "This is not about Captain Mainwaring of the Home Guard or neighbours peeping from behind curtains. It is about young and old, strong and weak, working together to protect a whole community."

He conceded that since the schemes were established across the whole of London 15 years ago, some of them now

existed in name only and needed to be revived. He added: "It is about watching and caring, not snooping. Any neighbourhood, however large or small, can set up a scheme and make a real difference to their quality of life. We are very anxious to encourage more young people to become involved."

Alun Michael, a junior Home Office minister, said the schemes could make a big difference in areas where they were properly run. In one inner-London estate, he said, crime dropped by 75 per cent.

Meerkats, a species of mongoose, are one of nature's most cooperative survival teams, eking out a living in harsh conditions in South Africa. The 10m carnivores enchanted viewers of a BBC *Wildlife* on One film narrated by Sir David Attenborough. He said: "The life of the meerkats is like a parable for human behaviour."

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*Israel condemns diplomatic 'strong-arm tactics' as Britain leads EU where America fears to tread



Netanyahu has capitalised on Har Homa row

Europe accused by liberals of boosting Right

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN JERUSALEM

THE Israeli Prime Minister launched a fresh attack on Robin Cook yesterday as liberal Israelis complained that Britain's strong-arm diplomatic tactics had backfired and boosted the Har Homa settlement project.

In an interview with a Vienna paper to coincide with the arrival here of Viktor Klima, the Chancellor of Austria — which takes over the European presidency from Britain on July 1 — Benjamin Netanyahu said that America was the only mediator in the peace process and that "too many cooks spoil the broth".

The right-wing Prime Minister told *The Courier*: "Let us not forget that the greatest tragedy of our people took place on European soil, and we expect the Europeans to be more understanding with regards to the security needs of the Jewish state."

Israeli officials noted that Herr Klima would be visiting the Jerusalem Holocaust memorial at Yad Vashem, a stop that Mr Cook — who did place a wreath on a memorial for Palestinians in annexed east Jerusalem — did not make.

Israeli Foreign Ministry officials said of Herr Klima: "He will be astonished by the warmth and affection he will receive here. He does not create provocations and he follows protocol."

Many Israeli liberal and left-wing commentators argued yesterday that Mr Cook's visit to Har Homa, the most controversial of all the

144 settlements so far, had boosted right-wing efforts to push forward building there.

"Cook's visit to Har Homa... exposed the construction delays in the area, and ironically it is he who will cause Israel's decision to finally begin construction there," noted Shimon Shiffer, diplomatic correspondent of the Tel Aviv daily *Yediot Aharonot*.

Akiva Eldar, columnist on the liberal paper *Haaretz* and a noted critic of the Prime Minister, disclosed yesterday: "Netanyahu, who also holds the Ministry of Housing portfolio, did everything possible to avoid publishing tenders for contractors."

Fellow *Haaretz* commentator Dan Margalit said: "Netanyahu, refusing Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert's request, slowed down the work on the Har Homa infrastructure. Now, because of Cook's actions, the green light will be given for renewing pressure on the Prime Minister to send additional tractors to the site."

There was a wide consensus among Jews that Mr Cook's actions over Har Homa had bolstered Mr Netanyahu's political standing at home and enhanced his argument for barring Europe from Middle East peace-making. "If there was any chance for Britain and Mr Cook to play a meaningful role as an honest broker, he slammed the door in his own face by behaving like a bull in a china shop," said political commentator Yossi Olmert.



Jayantha Dhanapala, the UN envoy who will decide which diplomats accompany weapons inspectors

Diplomats join UN arms teams in Iraq

Geneva: President Saddam Hussein's commitment to allow United Nations weapons inspectors into Iraqi presidential sites will be put to the test for the first time next week by a team of international diplomats (Peter Capella writes).

The UN announced yesterday that a special group of Arabic-speaking diplomats will accompany the UNSCOM inspectors into eight presidential compounds.

The group includes Simon Collis, a counsellor from the

British Embassy in Jordan, and 11 others from countries that are in the Security Council. They are expected to arrive in Baghdad early next week and will stay in Iraq for at least a fortnight.

Jayantha Dhanapala, the UN envoy in charge of the group, said the visits would take place without warning and according to the inspectors' own judgment. At least two diplomats will accompany each team and Mr Dhanapala said he would choose them.

Cook visit reopens settlements debate

Michael Binyon assesses the results of the Foreign Secretary's pugnacious approach to Middle East affairs

ROBIN COOK'S visit to the Har Homa settlement was intended to send a signal — the strongest yet — to both Arabs and Israelis.

The message was blunt: new settlements are the cause of the two-year stalemate now burying the peace process. It could not have been clearer, and now all Israel is focused on the muddy hilltop that was at the centre of Tuesday's mêlée.

"We very clearly signalled the importance that we attach to the issue of settlements," Mr Cook said. "It is very much back on the agenda of the debate in Israel." He added: "We have clearly demonstrated Europe's determination not to be sidelined on this issue and get progress on the peace process."

He took a gamble. He knew that the Israelis would object. He knew that there would be protests, even a diplomatic protest. He did not anticipate the storm — political as well as headlines — that broke over the rowdy gathering as hardline settlers hurled abuse at Britain and its Foreign Secretary.

Nor did he realise the domestic value to Benjamin Netanyahu of a well publicised snub to a visitor from a

country still seen by many Zionists as the old colonial authority.

But having decided to highlight the issue that Britain and its European partners have long seen as the one too often evaded by Washington, Mr Cook could not back down. "To do that would have sent a very wrong signal to both sides," he said afterwards.

And in any case, some advisers argued, why should he? No country recognises Israeli jurisdiction over occupied Arab land and Mr Cook was doing no more than reiterate a point stated defiantly in the centre of Hebron by Malcolm Rifkind, his Conservative predecessor, when that city, too, held the peace process to ransom: "All settlements are illegal."

Mr Netanyahu complained that Mr Cook "broke the rules". In this he was vigorously encouraged by fellow European Union foreign ministers last weekend. Europe has big money at stake. Britain alone

held by the British consulate-general in Arab east Jerusalem, which does not recognise Israeli jurisdiction.

Britain repeatedly assures both Israelis and Arabs that it has no "agenda" of its own apart from peace. This has come under increasing strain. Even pro-Western Arab leaders have complained of Western double standards in comparing the zeal to enforce UN resolutions on Iraq and those on Israel.

Britain argues that engagement with Israel yields better results than crude pressure, but Mr Cook believed that on this key question it was time for a more robust approach. He knew that, unless he confronted the issue head-on, he would undermine the inability of the Europeans to play a role apart from being America's cheerleaders.

In this he was vigorously encouraged by fellow European Union foreign ministers last weekend. Europe has big money at stake. Britain alone

has paid \$65 million (£40 million) towards the construction of Gaza airport, agreed in the interim arrangements with the Palestinians.

However, Israel has delayed its opening for more than a year by impounding the vital radar in a customs warehouse. The Israelis have also prohibited the transfer of large stone blocks from the West Bank for the seaport construction.

Mr Cook has insisted that Europe must act in tandem with the Americans. Fellow Europeans are less convinced: they see a lack of will in Washington to exert real pressure and believe that their large trade with Israel gives them legitimate leverage.

Mr Cook has resisted calls to use this, arguing that it would drive Israel into a siege mentality. He could not, however, represent the EU presidency without making clear European impatience. Har Homa was the symbolic occasion. It was tense, fraught and exposed him to Israeli and British — accusations of meddling. At the end of the tumultuous visit, he still believed that he had been right.

Leading article and Letters, page 25



Cook: determined to assert European Union role

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Policemen jailed over killing in Turkey

FROM ANDREW FINKEL IN ISTANBUL

FIVE policemen were jailed yesterday over the manslaughter of a journalist in a case widely regarded as a test of Turkey's commitment to tame its security forces.

Metin Goktepe, 27, a reporter for *Evsene*, a radical left-wing newspaper which has now closed under government legal pressure, was detained in a sports centre in January 1996 while covering demonstrations after a prison riot. His body was discovered the next day.

A police investigation concluded that Goktepe had fallen off a wall while trying to escape, but pathologists said that the journalist had suffered a brain haemorrhage, and internal bleeding after being kicked and clubbed about the head.

Fadime Goktepe, his mother, became a national celebrity as a simple but dignified spokeswoman for those demanding justice for their children who had disappeared or suffered under police detention.

The court, in Afyon, released six others for lack of evidence. Public opinion was incensed by the failure of the 11 accused to appear in court for most of their trial.

Last night, lawyers representing the family complained that the sentences meted out — of up to seven and a half years — were lenient by Turkish standards.

Chinese leader sets three-year goal for reform

FROM JAMES PRINGLE IN BEIJING

WITH unusual candour for a Chinese leader and dispensing with delectable clichés, Zhu Rongji, China's new Prime Minister, undertook yesterday to lead a three-year drive to solve the country's economic difficulties, which have left tens of millions of people unemployed.

Foreign diplomats say Mr Zhu's frankness in his first press conference since becoming Prime Minister indicated the depth of China's problems caused by the economic crisis in East Asia, bankrupt banks, slower economic growth, falling foreign investment and failing state-run industries that could lead to widespread social instability.

Yet for all his authority on economic matters, it was clear that Mr Zhu, third in the leadership line-up after President Jiang Zemin and Li Peng, the former Prime Minister, who both rank ahead of him on the standing committee of the Politburo, did not have the same influence in the political domain.

His political responses, however, were short, measured and pursued the predictable party line, and he ruled out any official reassessment of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown. The party and Government had reached a

correct conclusion, he said, referring to the official verdict that the 1989 demonstrations were counter-revolutionary. "This conclusion will not change," Mr Zhu said. "On this matter the whole party is entirely of one mind."

Still, the question by a Hong Kong reporter on the Tiananmen incident, still a taboo subject here, was heard live by tens of millions of listeners throughout China.

Asked if village-level democracy in some parts of China would be extended to the national level in elections for the President and Prime Minister, Mr Zhu said this was a problem of reform of the political system, and more research was needed.

On the economy, Mr Zhu, China's economic chief since 1993 who is credited with curbing an earlier bout of inflation, spoke with unusual frankness, admitting he faced an arduous task that some envoys say may cost him his job if he fails.

"Actually I am really fearful and I am afraid that I will let the people down," Mr Zhu said. "However, no matter what is waiting for me ahead, a minefield or a bottomless chasm, I will march forward courageously." As Chinese journalists applauded, Mr

Zhu added: "Honour permits no turning back and I will bend my back to the task until my dying day."

The 75-minute news conference, at the end of the annual session of China's parliament, was noteworthy for being so unlike that of Mr Zhu's predecessor, the unpopular Mr Li, who with wooden mannerisms often read answers or consulted colleagues.

Mr Zhu's press conference was spontaneous and unscripted. For at least five years, the final news conference of China's parliament, the National People's Congress, was a staged affair under Mr Li, with questions agreed in advance and asked only by those correspondents who agreed with the format.

It was Mr Li who signed a martial law order that ultimately sent troops into Tiananmen Square to suppress student demonstrators while Mr Zhu, as Mayor of Shanghai, was able to end the unrest there without bloodshed.

Mr Zhu again ruled out a devaluation of the yuan and promised to defend the Hong Kong dollar's link to the American currency. He said a yuan devaluation amid the Asian financial meltdown would affect regional stability.



Lance Corporal Trevor Smith, a Royal Marine from HMS Cornwall, in Freetown with two of the children who were helped by the British team

Frigate finishes African aid trip

BY MICHAEL EVANS DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

THE Royal Navy Type 22 frigate HMS Cornwall, leaves Sierra Leone today after completing a three-week humanitarian mission, following the violent overthrow of the military junta by West African peacekeeping troops last month.

Medical teams from the warship have run child health clinics, teams of engineers have repaired essential port equipment in Freetown, the capital; hospital wards, damaged by the fighting, have been reopened; and water supplies restored.

Since HMS Cornwall arrived off Freetown on March 1, the ship's Sea King helicopter has been ferrying food and medical supplies to key towns, including Bo, Kenema and Makeni. The Sea King from 510 Naval Air Squadron, flown by Lieutenant Paul Callaghan and Lieutenant Gareth Mills, has been the key asset in supporting Peter Penfold, the British High Commissioner, and the people of Sierra Leone in the liberated towns.

In one rescue mission, the Sea King flew two people with gunshot wounds from Makeni to a hospital in Freetown. It also brought Mr Penfold back to Sierra Leone from Conakry, the capital of Guinea, once the junta had been overthrown.

Mandela accuses rugby bosses

FROM INIGO GILMORE IN PRETORIA

PRESIDENT MANDELA became the first South African head of state to be called to justify his actions in court yesterday, when he became embroiled in a row over black representation in sport.

The President was summoned to Pretoria High Court after the South African Rugby Football Union (SARFU) objected to an investigation into allegations of racism and maladministration in rugby. Louis Luyt, the president of SARFU, said the proposed inquiry violated his rights.

In a statement issued before the hearing, Mr Mandela questioned the judges' decision to call him, saying that if he had been asked to give evidence to all 26 commissions of inquiry he had set up, the functioning of his Government would have been undermined.

He argued passionately in court that rugby was important for nation-building because it reached areas politics could not.

He said: "What has happened is a matter of public interest. The leadership of SARFU is tainted. I hope the court will in due course pass a judgment which will allow the commission to do its work."

Rejecting arguments by Mike Maritz, a lawyer for SARFU, that the rugby union had adequate mechanisms to deal with disputes, Mr Mandela said he could not ignore public concerns that something was rotten in SARFU. "I don't know if this is true, but the leadership of SARFU is under a cloud of suspicion," Mr Mandela said. "They do not have the credibility to probe the issue objectively."

The hearing continues.

Hong Kong row as chief's friend escapes charges

FROM MICHAEL MACKAY IN HONG KONG

FOR the second time in two weeks, Hong Kong legal authorities have shied away from prosecuting a case for fear it might offend Beijing.

The row over the decision of Elsie Leung, the Justice Secretary, not to prosecute Sally Aw, the newspaper magnate, in a fraud case caused widespread comment. Two weeks ago Ms Leung caused similar controversy when she decided not to prosecute Xinhua, the official Chinese news agency, for allegedly violating a privacy law. Xinhua has three offices in Hong Kong.

The case involving Ms Aw's company opened with a brief hearing yesterday when three executives of her Hong Kong Standard daily newspaper appeared in court on fraud charges. Ms Aw, 67, a member of the Beijing parliamentary body, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, was named in the charges announced on Tuesday by the anti-corruption police, but was not charged. Lawyers for two of the accused denied the charges. The other has not commented.

Tung Chee-hwa, the Beijing-appointed Chief Executive of Hong Kong, defended Ms Leung's decision when asked by reporters if the move were linked to Mr Tung's long friendship with the Aw family. "The decision to prosecute or not rests entirely with the Secretary of Justice," Mr Tung said.

Ms Leung refused to disclose her reasons, but her department said the decision took full account of available evidence. "The status of any suspect or political factors did not feature in our decision," the department said in a statement.

Ms Aw is the chairman of Sing Tao Holdings, which

publishes the Hong Kong Standard and Sing Tao Daily. Sing Tao Holdings also has a 43 per cent stake in Culturecom Holdings which runs the newspaper Tin Tin Daily News.

Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption alleges that between October 1993 and May last year, three Hong Kong Standard executives "conspired together with Aw Sian to defraud purchasers of advertising space in the Hong Kong Standard and Sunday Standard by various dishonest means".

It is alleged that more than 20,000 additional papers were printed, then pulped, to boost advertising rates. Mr Tung was one of three independent non-executive directors of Sing Tao Holdings. He is generally acknowledged not to have been involved in day-to-day operations but to have operated more as an occasional adviser.

Mr Tung's father, Tung Chao-yung, from whom Mr Tung inherited the directorship, was a close and longstanding friend of Miss Aw's father, Aw Boon Haw.



Aw: longstanding ties with the Tung family

French dental students told to dig around for drill practice

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

FRENCH gravediggers are selling the teeth of the dead to dental students in a macabre echo of the Victorian practice of exhuming corpses for scientific study, according to a report in a scientific journal that has shaken the dental establishment to its roots.

French students in dental surgery are required to obtain real teeth on which to practise drilling, filling and polishing during the third year of their studies and the magazine *Sciences et Avenir* (Science and the Future) claimed that a grisly traffic in the teeth of the dead was encouraged by some university faculties.

Students said that they were directed to specific cemeteries where gravediggers had supplies of teeth for sale. Using a

hidden camera, the TF1 television channel filmed an unidentified gravedigger selling a box of 200 teeth in jam jars for Fr500 (€50).

"At the start I did not believe it," one student identified only as Jean, told the magazine. "The professor told us we had to get teeth either from dentists or the nearest cemeteries. We thought it was a joke, but when we talked with older students we realised it was serious."

The magazine said most of the teeth were probably collected from bodies that had been moved from tombs when a family's concession on a given plot ran out, but some may have been extracted from more recent burials. "According to some students, several

teeth were still 'fresh'. Teeth take just a few days to dry out," the journal noted.

The demand for real teeth has grown since a law on infectious diseases was passed last November making it illegal for dentists to pass on their patients' teeth. In Montpellier several gravediggers were arrested recently for selling gold teeth and jewellery taken from bodies.

Michel Degrange, a professor of dental medicine at the University of Paris, confirmed that students were required to work on real teeth, but said that any black market teeth were "exceptional". Gravediggers denied the claims, pointing out that a police official had to be present at all exhumations.



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- ☐ MSc in Mathematics
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Ashdown tells war tribunal of Bosnia split map

FROM MARK FULLER IN THE HAGUE

PADDY ASHDOWN told the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia yesterday that an extraordinary conversation between himself and President Tudjman of Croatia at a London banquet in 1995 had laid bare the Croatian and Serbian intention to carve up Bosnia.

Although the wine was flowing at the VE-Day banquet at Guildhall on May 6, and Dr Tudjman had "consumed a certain amount of it", Mr Ashdown said the conversation and a hastily drawn map on the back of a banquet menu had given a clear indication of the Croatian and Serbian plans to consume Bosnia, leaving only a small place for Muslims within a greater Croatian federation.

Mr Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader and the first prominent politician to testify in public before the tribunal, was giving evidence in the trial of General Tihomir Blaskic. The former commander of Bosnian Croatian forces is charged with crimes against humanity and breaches of the Geneva Convention. It is alleged the general led "ethnic cleansing" campaigns through the Lasva Valley between April 1993 and March 1994.

The prosecution had called Mr Ashdown to "testify in the 'international nature' of the conflict, which is vital to sustain charges under the Geneva Convention."

However, the court was treated to Mr Ashdown's colourful narrative, highlighting

Dr Tudjman's love of "a glass or two" of wine and disorderly map-making on the back of banquet menus.

Reading directly from his diary, Mr Ashdown said the court that he had asked President Tudjman to show him how the former Yugoslavia would look in ten years' time. The Croatian leader sketched a map which, Mr Ashdown said, clearly showed the end of Bosnia and provided hardly any room for Muslims.

Mr Ashdown said the 20 to 30-minute conversation and the map, which he replicated on another menu, led him "strongly to suspect" that a deal had already been done between Croatia and Serbia.

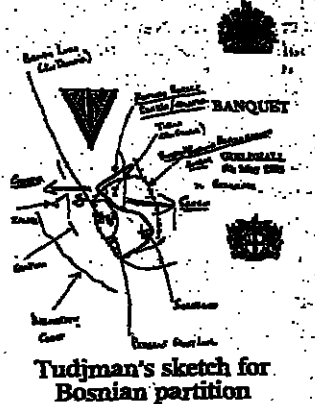
However, counsel for the defence pounced on the bibulous nature of the conversation and Mr Ashdown's frequent remarks about his "hazy memory". Asked by the defence if either he or President Tudjman was intoxicated, Mr Ashdown said that they had both enjoyed themselves. The judge then interrupted to restore "serenity to the proceedings" and remove any inferences to the state of intoxication.

Mr Ashdown reacted angrily to defence suggestions that the map — a series of squiggles and arrows in fountain pen — could not be trusted. He said: "It does not take a brain surgeon to see the map was hastily drawn."

But he said 25 years as a politician had given him the ability to realise the truth of off-the-record statements. He said that he had "wagered a bottle of Croatian white wine against Dr Tudjman's claim that he could recapture Krajina within eight days."

The testimony took on an element of farce as old banquet menus were shown by a projector and Mr Ashdown had trouble finding "the dot" that was supposed to be Belgrade.

□ Zagreb: The Croatian Government has pardoned 13,575 Serbs from charges for war-related crimes in Eastern Slavonia, a formerly Serb-held area in eastern Croatia, officials said. (AP)



German rivals vie for Blair effect

FROM ROGER BOYES IN BONN

BOTH Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, and his challenger Gerhard Schröder are anxious to exploit Tony Blair's visit to Bonn today, forcing the Prime Minister to tread carefully through Germany's electoral minefield.

The trip, lasting only a few hours, is chiefly preparation for the European summit in May, which, under British chairmanship, will decide who is fit to join the European monetary union.

However, Herr Kohl has an election to win in September and all the signs are that he will fight it on the state of the economy, which has begun to recover. That means many European and bilateral Anglo-German issues are being given an edge by the Chancellor's determination to show he is delivering new jobs.

The eagerness of British coal producers to move into the German energy market — and German resistance to these plans — has prompted a rather bitter cross-Channel dispute about state subsidies and the free market. Herr Kohl and Herr Schröder have to show they are energetic in their defence of jobs in the coalmining region of the

Ruhr. Mr Blair would dearly like to leave the respective British and German companies and energy suppliers to deal with this wrangle because he wants to use the many forthcoming summits — European, transatlantic and G8 — to strike statesmanlike postures. The German politicians, with only six months to go before the election, are less concerned with world politics than with enhancing their reputations for economic competence.

That explains Herr Schröder's eagerness to meet Mr Blair today, an hour after the talks with Herr Kohl. He has repeatedly presented himself as being the spearhead of a Blair-like revolution in Germany, a symbol of generational change. The Social Democratic team will meet Mr Blair in the British Ambassador's residence and it seems likely that Herr Schröder will be accompanied by the newly anointed Prime Minister of North Rhine-Westphalia, Wolfgang Clement.

Herr Clement is a good friend of Herr Schröder. Together they can probably outflank the more dogmatic party chairman, Oskar Lafontaine.



A Serbian Orthodox icon is carried through Pristina yesterday during demonstrations against Albanian separatists. An opposing protest had earlier ended in skirmishes

Serbs take to streets as Belgrade softens over Kosovo

FROM TOM WALKER IN PRISTINA

MORE than 30,000 Serbs took to the streets of Pristina yesterday, the first massive demonstration of support for Belgrade's bloody repression of ethnic Albanian separatists.

Their march came as the Serbian leadership, intimidated for the first time that it was prepared to negoti-

ate Kosovo's autonomy. The assurance of dialogue from Belgrade seemed enough to persuade Klaus Kinkel, the German Foreign Minister, and Hubert Védrine, his French counterpart, not to push for new sanctions against Serbia.

Emerging from talks with President Milosevic, the ministers said progress had been made since the six-nation Contact Group first met to

discuss the Kosovo crisis ten days ago. They still wanted proof from Mr Milosevic, however, that Serb security forces have been withdrawn from Kosovo's central Drenica region. There was no evidence of any police or troops leaving the area yesterday.

While the diplomacy continued in Belgrade, there was a highly charged atmosphere in the Kosovo

capital. A smaller Albanian demonstration ended in skirmishes in the morning, and the Serbian march that followed carried an ugly hint of menace. Stewards and plainclothes police kept the demonstrators from vandalising Albanian property, however, and after two hours the Serbs dispersed peacefully.

Although the march had ostensibly been called by Serb students

from Pristina, in sheer weight of numbers and organisation it bore Belgrade's stamp. Albanian political sources pointed out the uncomfortable coincidence that, on the same day the Serbian Government announced its readiness to discuss autonomy for Kosovo, a massive demonstration in Pristina showed the depth of Serb anger over the Albanian separatist movement.

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Kennedy bids hit by fame fatigue

New York Americans are wondering whether the bubble has burst for celebrity auctions after the much-hyped sale of John F. Kennedy memorabilia here turned out to be as flat and flavourless as New York's tapwater (Tunku Varadarajan writes).

Although the auctioneers, Guernsey's of Manhattan, were putting a brave face on the sale — emphasising that the *Honey Fitz*, JFK's 88-tonne yacht, sold for \$5.4 million (£3.27 million) — there are unmistakable signs that the country could be suffering from celebrity-auction fatigue.

The attendance at the auction, at the handsome Seven Regiment Armory on Park Avenue, was pitiful on both days, with empty seats outnumbering occupied ones by almost five to one. Yet more dismal was the bidding. Item after item sparked lukewarm interest. A number of them simply failed to sell. *Flash II*, his boat, was among them.

Clinton legal team faces Republican challenge

FROM TOM RHODES
IN WASHINGTON

LEADING Republicans in Congress are considering unprecedented legislation to prevent further funding for the record number of lawyers they claim the White House has hired to defend President Clinton against personal scandal.

The new measures, being drawn up by appropriations committees in both the House and Senate, would cut off taxpayers' money to the White House counsel's office until the Administration proves its lawyers are no longer engaged in defending the President against allegations of sexual misconduct.

Under Mr Clinton, the White House counsel's office has grown from four to 34 lawyers and associates, the largest and most expensive executive legal operation in American history. Many of those are involved in handling the numerous scandals that have plagued him.

This team, paid an annual \$2.4 million (£1.5 million), accounts for 10 per cent of the White House budget, and the presidency has added 12 more lawyers from federal agencies to the staff. Justice Department rules prevent government lawyers from



Senator Campbell: "Clinton misusing government lawyers"

handling personal business for government employees.

The new congressional initiatives, led by Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, a Colorado Republican, would stop the White House from spending money on salaries or office expenses until it could prove that no tax dollars were being used to defend the President against charges either in the Paula Jones sexual harassment suit or his alleged affair with Monica Lewinsky, a former trainee. Mr Campbell, a former Democrat who

switched sides, called hearings next month requiring Erskine Bowles, the White House Chief of Staff, to testify that the money is being spent on government business.

"There is no question in my mind that there is taxpayers' money that is paying for the private defence for President Clinton's escapades," said the senator. "I just think that money for his defence should be raised through a private source. To expand the counsel's office by 600 per cent to defend himself against things that have nothing to do with the operation of the Government is wrong."

The White House said the counsel's office had grown substantially because so many congressional committees were investigating the President, but initially declined comment on the proposal by Congress. A move to cut off funding, which would shut down the White House counsel's office, is without precedent, as past budgets for individual operations in the West Wing have always been rubber-stamped by Capitol Hill.

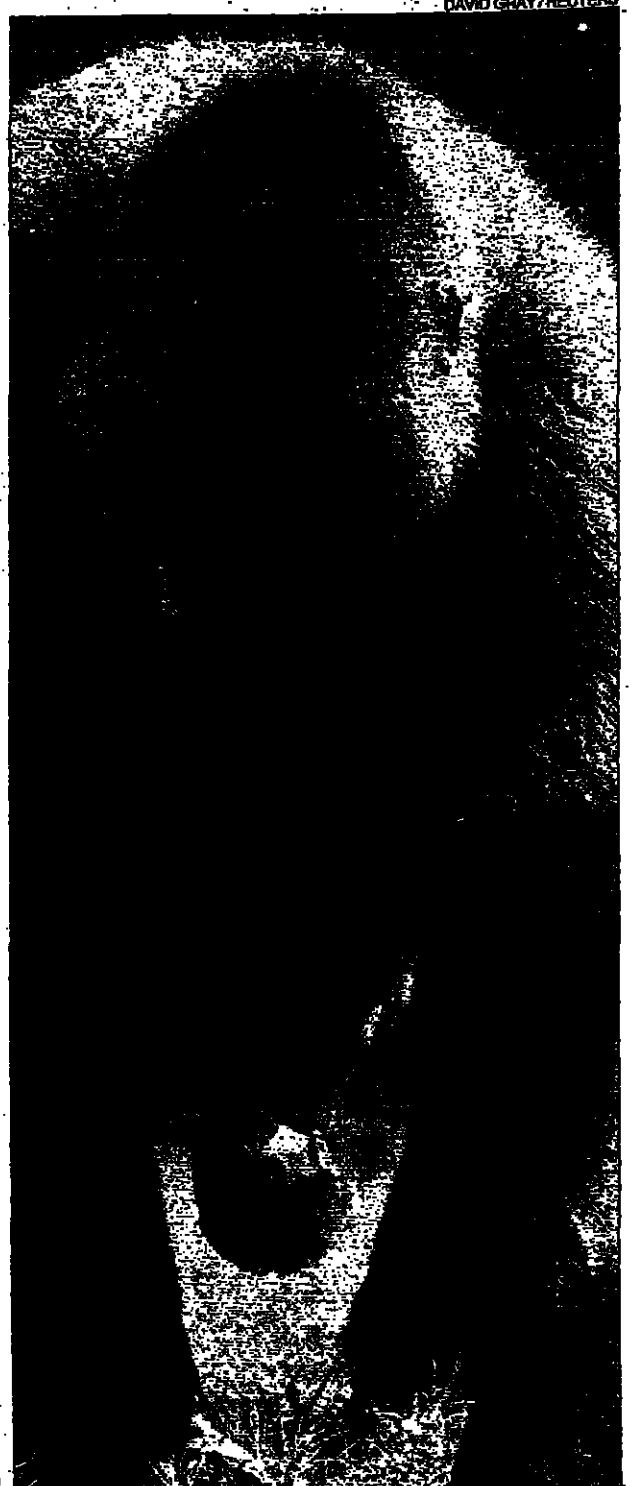
Mr Campbell has made repeated requests for information from the White House, but has received no response. "There is a fine line between lawyers acting in an official or private capacity," he said. "All I

am trying to do is draw that line." Charles Ruff, the White House counsel, and Bruce Lindsey, his deputy, lead an office that is responsible for dealing with government scandals, congressional investigations, examining the background of nominees and the vetting of the President's legislative initiatives. Previous administrations have included eight or fewer lawyers.

Capitol Hill in part has been prompted by the White House admission this week that the counsel's office was in charge of implementing Mr Clinton's orders to find and distribute a stack of friendly letters to him from Kathleen Willey, a former volunteer who alleged on network television that he had groped her at the Oval Office doorway.

It emerged yesterday that Newt Gingrich, the House Speaker, and Henry Hyde, chairman of the House judiciary committee, had agreed to send a small group of congressmen to examine evidence against Mr Clinton assembled by Kenneth Starr, the independent prosecutor. The Republican leadership wants to evaluate any basis for impeachment.

Perils of fan mail, page 22
Leading article, page 25



Fraia, a western lowland gorilla, with her male ten-day-old baby at Taronga Zoo in Sydney. It is the first gorilla to be bred successfully in an Australian zoo. Taronga has nine other gorillas.

WORLD IN BRIEF

Gaullist expelled over Le Pen pact

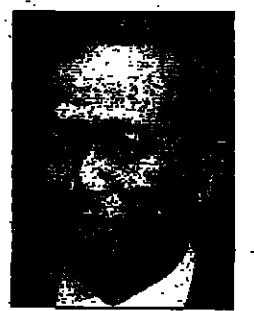
Paris: The French Gaullist party has expelled one of its most senior figures after he declared his willingness to make an alliance with the far-right National Front in the wake of last weekend's regional elections (Ben Macintyre writes). Jean-François Mancel, former secretary-general of the RPR party, broke ranks with his fellow Gaullists and defied the party leadership by saying he would accept support from the racist party led by Jean-Marie Le Pen to prevent the Left from gaining control of the Oise region north of Paris. Philippe Séguin, leader of the RPR, has condemned any strategic arrangement with the Front as an "alliance with the devil". M Mancel said he was dismayed by his expulsion. "The strategy of open war against the Front has ended in complete stalemate; carrying on with it is madness," he said, adding that the time had come for the mainstream Right to stop treating the Front as a pariah.

Crash airline grounded

Taipei: Taiwan aviation authorities grounded all flights by the domestic Formosa Airlines, whose 36-seater Saab 340 crashed into the Taiwan Strait on Wednesday, killing all 13 passengers and crew. Authorities earlier grounded Formosa's six remaining Saab 340 planes for safety checks. It was Formosa's fifth crash in five years. Previous crashes all involved Dornier 228 planes. The Transportation Ministry says it will punish Formosa Airlines for its poor safety record. (Reuters)

Exiled leader faces \$50m fine

Phnom Penh: A court has ruled that Prince Norodom Ranariddh, right, the deposed Cambodian co-premier must pay damages of more than \$50 million (£31 million) even if he is granted a pardon, Chem Snguon, the Minister of Justice, said. A military court found Prince Ranariddh guilty of plotting a coup and responsible for material damage caused in the fighting in Phnom Penh last July. An aide to the prince said he had no money to pay. (Reuters)



The car in front is a write-off

Tokyo: A new hazard for drivers has appeared on Japan's narrow, crowded streets in the form of the mobile phone. Drivers using mobile phones caused 2,297 traffic accidents last year, killing 25 people and injuring more than 3,000, the National Police Agency said yesterday in the first survey of its kind. Nearly half the phone-related accidents took place while drivers were trying to answer the phone. In most cases, drivers using phones smashed into the car ahead of them. (Reuters)

20 years' jail call for Papon



Bordeaux: The chief prosecutor called for a 20-year sentence on Maurice Papon, left, the French wartime official who is on trial for crimes against humanity. Henri Desclaux said he was asking for less than the maximum life sentence "to take into account each person's responsibility". A verdict on M Papon, 87, the first French official to be tried for crimes against humanity in the Second World War, is expected on Friday next week. (AFP)

French porn on the state

Paris: The French Health Ministry is dabbling in the pornographic film business, helping to fund five X-rated films intended to promote condom use in the battle against Aids, a ministry official said. The first of the five short subjects will be aired by French pay-television channel Canal Plus on April 4. "A recent study found that Aids is again on the rise in France, and that those who watch these broadcasts are at risk," Stéphanie Guinet, a Canal Plus spokeswoman, said. (Reuters)

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NATIONAL TRAINEESHIPS
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US 'is risking new Vietnam' in Colombia

THE United States risks being sucked into a Vietnam-style quagmire after stepping up military and civilian involvement in Colombia to counter increased instability caused by left-wing rebels and the drugs war.

So far this year, the US military and counter-drug presence in Colombia has almost doubled to more than 200 officials. They are involved in counter-insurgency training, intelligence gathering and civilian spraying of drug crops.

In response, one of the two main guerrilla groups this week threatened to target US military advisers, claiming that they are conducting covert counter-insurgency operations. American military officials deny they are significantly beefing up their presence, claiming the numbers fluctuate as personnel are rotated. They say no US combat troops are stationed in

America faces being sucked into a bloody quagmire, writes David Adams

Colombia and most personnel are involved in manning two radar stations that monitor drug-smuggling planes.

The Clinton Administration has shied away from outright involvement in fighting the guerrillas, partly because of the human rights abuses committed by the Colombian military and its paramilitary allies. The focus of US policy towards the country has been fighting cocaine, heroin and marijuana traffic. But the US involvement in the drugs war has taken on more of a

counter-insurgency role since the guerrillas established lucrative links with drug traffickers. The flow of drugs money into guerrilla coffers has turned them into one of the best financed, most highly equipped rebel fighting forces in Latin America's long history of guerrilla warfare.

After a humiliating defeat of the Colombian Army this month by guerrillas operating in the country's dense southern jungle, Washington is hotly debating increased aid to tackle the rebels. About 80 soldiers died in the attack and another 60 were taken prisoner by the guerrillas.

The Clinton Administration is also urging Colombia to increase its own efforts to strengthen its ill-equipped armed forces. That was the message during a visit to Colombia this week by General Charles 'Wilhelm' head of the Miami-based US Southern Command, responsible for



An anti-drugs patrol in Colombia, where guerrilla groups have forged lucrative links with drug traffickers

US security in Latin America. But on Monday, the guerrilla commander of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), who led this month's attack, warned America to stay away. Fabian Ramirez, a FARC regional commander, said: "The claim that the

United States is combating drugs in Colombia is a sophism. All the military and economic aid it is giving to the army is to fight the guerrillas." He added: "Most [Colombian army] battalions have US advisers, so it is clear that

at any moment, and the objective will be to defeat the Americans."

Analysts say it is time that Washington reviewed its policy in Colombia. Increased US involvement could give the guerrillas more ideological ammunition, they say. Coleta

Youngers, an expert on Colombia at the Washington Office on Latin America, said: "You can look at case after case over history in which the United States gets involved and then slides down this slippery slope, from Vietnam to Central America."

America to allow Cuba aid flights

FROM BRONWEN MADDOX IN WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT CLINTON is set to give the green light for direct flights to Cuba to bolster humanitarian relief, after the Pope expressed concern about the suffering of the Cuban people during his visit to the island in January.

Approval, which could come today, would lift the ban on flights imposed in 1996 when Cuban fighter jets shot down a private plane belonging to Miami-based Cuban exiles.

Madeleine Albright, the Secretary of State, and other senior officials have recommended to Mr Clinton that humanitarian missions should be able to resume direct flights from the US.

Mike McCurry, the White House spokesman, said yesterday: "We were deeply impressed by the Pope's expression of concern for the suffering of the Cuban people." But he added that "the basic elements of our policy", including the punitive trade embargo, would remain the same.

\$200m winner sues Las Vegas casinos over tampering

FROM GILES WHITTELL IN LOS ANGELES

A LOS ANGELES woman who won \$200 million (£121 million) over three years on high-stakes Las Vegas slot machines is locked in a bitter battle with three famous hotels there. She claims they tampered with her favourite machines while she took breaks from gambling.

Sheila King, who worked as a private detective in Miami before finding richer pickings in casinos, was considered the luckiest woman alive when her hot streak on the slot machines began in 1991. Recently widowed, Mrs King visited Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas that year, and moved on a whim from a machine taking \$25 tokens to one costing \$500 for every spin of its wheels. Seldom used, the \$500 slot machines can strip a gambler of a fortune in seconds.

Mrs King put in five tokens worth \$2,500, winning nothing. Her sixth attempt left her with three "sevens" in a row—a \$250,000 jackpot. As casino staff converged on her to pour champagne and write her winner's cheque, she won

another \$100,000. "My knees hit the floor," she recalled in *The New York Times* yesterday. "I don't know how I was breathing." At her low point in 1993 she was \$200,000 in debt, but by New Year's Eve that year she was \$1.3 million ahead after winning \$930,000 on a single night.

Now 60, Mrs King's luck started fading and the party ended in 1994. With her net

'My knees hit the floor. I don't know how I was breathing'

winnings at \$300,000, she accused the casinos of breaking verbal agreements not to carry out maintenance work on her favourite machines in her absence. Law suits were filed against Caesar's and the Las Vegas Hilton, while the MGM Grand received a complaint accusing it of rigging a machine to slow down her winning ways.

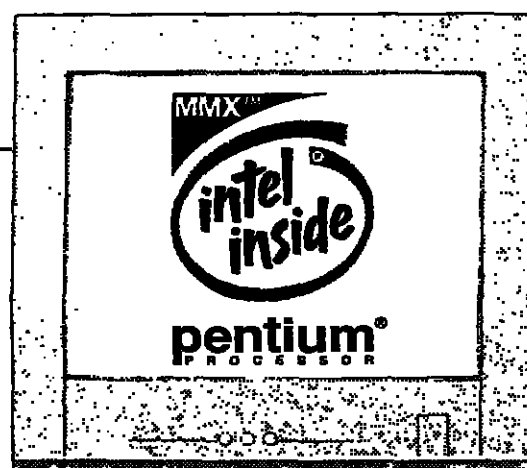
A Las Vegas court passed the cases to the Nevada state gaming board, which refused Mrs King, even a formal hearing, saying they were outside its jurisdiction. She is now appealing to the state's supreme court, and writing a book.

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The Little Book of Calm is a bestseller. But does it work? **Daniel Johnson** spent a week following its advice — and emerged feeling anything but calm.

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lessons in
calmness
from
children

Oddly, for such a short book, concision is not the LBC's strong

up. The LBC: "Be up for the sunrise."



Tuesday. Critical remarks about *The Times* by our former East Asia editor, Jonathan Mirsky, appear on the Internet. Feeling battered, I

Sunday. To the Barbican for a children's concert on the theme of "Heroes and Heroines". On the way I follow the LBC's advice: take a back seat and "spend the journey sharing your calm". (But *somebody*

and I take Leo out. He promises to be good. Back inside, he jumps up again, so Sarah holds him down on her lap during the *William Tell* overture, while he conducts furiously. The LBC says sweating makes you calmer.

Back home the *LBC* tells me to trick my subconscious by repeating: "Every moment I feel calmer and calmer..." It doesn't work. But it has one suggestion that does: "Say your prayers."

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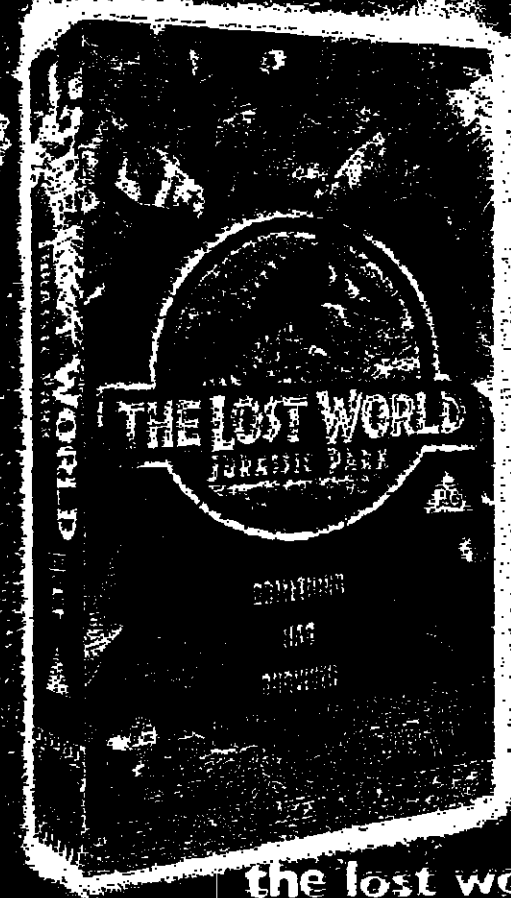
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Why can't we learn the fine art of shutting up?



MAN ON TOP
JOE JOSEPH

Excuse me for butting in, but isn't it time we all shut up? I don't mean to quibble with everything that the historian Theodore Zeldin has been telling us in *An Intimate History of Conversation*, his current Radio 4 series about the joys of talk.

Zeldin is certainly right, for example, in saying that conversations can change your view of the world. Most of you have probably had that experience of entering a party of unknown faces, plucking up the courage to talk to a complete stranger, and quickly realising that had you stayed at home you might never have met this new person, and thus would never have believed there could be someone more irritating than Bob Monkhouse.

But people talk too much today, not too little. I'm all for New Conversation, just as long as it comes in small doses. Certainly by the time you reach your thirties,

you've already got all the ideas you can handle.

So when you meet somebody at a party who wants to introduce you to a whole new set of insights about the world, you have to be honest with them and say: "These sound like they would be very nice insights to possess but I've grown used to the ones I have, and I'm not in the market for new views at the moment. But why not try that guy over there. He could do with some new attitudes. He's even more irritating than Bob Monkhouse."

The basic problem is that when God made the human body he designed it to last for 30 years or so. Our hearts, our hips, our eyes, they're all built to give trouble-free service for around 30 years.

The same goes for conversation. After 30 years of talking we have nothing left to say to the world. That's why God invented the television. After the age of 30 you

really jabber away only to people you don't know especially well, people with whom you feel awkward if there's a silence.

That's the secret of choosing successful chat-show guests: "No, I can't have him on the show, he's one of my best friends. We go to watch Chelsea play together every week. We're old pals. I haven't exchanged more than two words with him since 1986."

Obviously, there are occasions when keeping quiet is not an option. This is why, over time, we have invented new ways to converse with strangers: at cocktail parties, for example.

Cocktail conversation is basically just a polite form of verbal tennis, only without the need to sweat so much. The idea is not always to say what you think.

Indeed, many of today's familiar greetings are merely the surviving shreds of longer, more combative sentences which have been pruned

over time so as to generate less social friction: "How are you (Original ending: 'able to live with yourself, you smug turnip?')"

"How do you do (that weird thing with your nostrils when you speak?)"

"Hello (hello, hello. We've got a right one here and no mistake)."

"I've heard so much about you (and your blow-up doll, HAH-HAH-HAH!)"

Zeldin — who says "the kind of conversation I'm interested in is one which aims to make a difference to the world, as well as to yourself, but which is always an experiment, whose results are never guaranteed" — is all in favour of the power of even idle chat.

He points out that we owe the discovery of DNA to ceaseless conversations which were held between Crick and Watson over several years, all conducted on the

basis that both of them could say whatever came into their heads, however dumb it might sound.

But that doesn't mean that similar conversations will produce similar breakthroughs. For mankind, conversations between two inventors saying the first thing that comes into their heads mostly produce more humdrum contributions to humanity, such as "Eazy-Squeeze Cheese — the cheese you can squeeze straight from a tube".

Compare this with Einstein's admirable approach. A colleague at Princeton said that Einstein "didn't need anybody to talk to because nobody was interested in his stuff, and he wasn't interested in what anybody else was doing".

Or take the French diplomat Talleyrand, who made a big name for himself as a conversationalist despite the fact that he would sit silently through parties, opening his mouth only as he was leaving to say something memorable to the

waiting audience ("I'm so bored, I think I've had more fun diving into empty swimming pools.")

Strangely, the rowdiest conversationalist is always the one you overhear demanding his rights to pretty much everything, except the right to remain silent. He doesn't even think it odd that every time he opens his mouth, his audience retreats like an ebbing tide.

The reason he doesn't notice anything peculiar in this is that it has been happening for years: he now subconsciously assumes this retreat to be an integral function of human speech (possibly governed by one of the lesser-known laws of Newtonian physics, whereby the very act of talking to someone creates a micro-atmosphere that mysteriously sucks them away from you.)

I would go over and put him straight, only I don't like to say too much.

When fan mail turns into a letter bomb

They're certainly odd, those letters that Kathleen Willey wrote to Bill Clinton. Warm, affectionate, chatty to the point of girlishness towards the man she claims assaulted her. Who would have thought that these innocuous little notes could amount to the salvation of a President?

But that is what they are. They have provided the American public with an excuse to do what they want to do anyway: hang on to their goodlooking President, even if he does have a rock star's conviction that women are a perk of the job. They find it hard to blame him when some of his accusers have acted like rock stars' groupies.

Kathleen Willey's letters, gushing about being his No 1 fan, swooning over a presidential speech that was one of his "many shining moments", are typical of female writing, full of colour and emotion. Of course, men write emotional letters, too. Lord Nelson's words to Lady Hamilton could have been written by Bridget Jones herself: "I can neither Eat or Sleep for thinking of

Kathleen Willey's notes to Bill Clinton have weakened her claims of assault. By Jean Rafferty

You, my dearest love. I never even touch pudding. The sentence concludes rather gnomically with "You know the reason" — perhaps a reference to some 18th-century precursor of chocolate body paint.

By and large, however, men do not write letters at all. Letters are evidence. Letters are black and white proof of your misdeeds writ large for the wife/boss/congressional hearing to see. One well-known woman journalist was required to return her lover's letters when their affair broke up. The man, an inveterate seducer, was afraid that if she drew such communication out of him, she might also want to communicate with his wife.

But Bill Clinton's trail of clues has been only physical,

not literary. While the unfortunately named Kathleen Willey was enthusing about working in the White House, her penpal Slick Willie was probably writing precisely nothing. The real conversation between them was going on silently.

The day Kathleen Willey walked into the Oval Office in 1993 she was fighting for survival. Her husband, Ed Willey, had been accused of embezzlement and they were

facing ruin. She needed more than just a job; she needed a saviour.

As a prominent middle-class Democrat in Virginia, she had been involved in local community projects and was also an active fund-raiser for the party. She had often met Clinton and usually flirted pleasantly with him. On this day the transaction between them moved beyond that harmless stage to something more. Maybe he misread her signals. Or maybe the President's idea of comforting a woman in distress is to offer a quick grope. It certainly seems to work for him.

But when it was over they were both in dangerous territory — he because he had broken the rule of avoiding lovers with less to lose than

him, difficult for a powerful man with his Democratic tastes. For Kathleen Willey the territory was tougher. When she came out of the Oval Office her face was flushed, her hair dishevelled. She seemed "flustered, happy and joyful", according to Kenneth Starr's chief witness, Linda Tripp. Many commentators have taken this to signify sexual excitement, but it may simply have been relief that she knew she would now receive help.

"It wouldn't be an actual spelling out of blackmail, 'You've got to give me a job', says the psychologist Dorothy Rowe. "That's a kind of conversation a man and woman can have without making it explicit. Women are very good at that. It's the way they've had to live for thousands of years. In cultures where the man is absolutely dominant a woman can be extremely powerful by making him feel guilty."

Over the next couple of years Kathleen Willey was given two different jobs in the White House and attended two international conferences as the only non-expert member of the US delegation.

Her thank-you letter to the President after visiting Indonesia described spending one day in a rainforest and the next diving in coral reefs, "experiences which I will never ever forget", she sighed. The tone of her letters is so warm that Virginia Ironside, the agony aunt, comments: "If I were a man, I would assume that she was making eyes at me on paper."

Perhaps Kathleen Willey is one of those women attracted to powerful men, but more likely she wanted to make things right with Clinton. He could give her what she really valued, a job close to power. The power and not the man is the aphrodisiac here.

Perhaps, too, she felt guilty herself, a strangely common occurrence among abused, battered — or indeed flirtatious — women. How could she not, when the very day she encountered President Clinton in the Oval Office, her husband committed suicide? "If you're married to someone who commits suicide, there's always a huge level of guilt," says Zeida West Meades, formerly of *Relate*.



Bill Clinton could give Kathleen Willey, above, what she really valued: a job close to power

"You think, if only I'd been there, if only I'd been back earlier, if only I'd listened to him the night before. Whatever she felt would be bound up with what happened on that day."

Judging from her letters, Kathleen Willey made the classic female mistake of taking a man's interest in her body to mean interest in her personally. "She's assuming

he wants to hear about her diving and swimming and whatever," says Dorothy Rowe. "That's so interested in her he'll take the time out from doing great things to read her notes." Willey may be the only woman in history to turn a sexual assault into a relationship.

Bill Clinton should stick to the great things of state. He does not have the depth of

vision required to lead morally, unlike Britain's great marriage leader Lord Nelson, who assured Lady Hamilton that he would obey her wishes and refuse to attend dinners where ladies were present. "With my present feelings I might be tested with 50 virgins naked," a dark room," he wrote.

Not a promise the current leader of the Western world could make.

It's not harassment, it's l'amour

WHERE there is love, there cannot be sexual harassment — or at least not in France, where *l'amour* and its forerunner, *le mariage*, are deemed art forms.

This attitude, a remnant from the epoch of the masterpiece *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, is alive and well in 1998. A boss can stroke his secretary's back, play footsie with her under the table and tell her how much he loves and misses her — and be acquitted. These approaches were unwanted? Too bad.

That is what appeal court judges in Douai, northern France, ruled in the case of Fabienne, a secretary who took her amorous boss to court. She listed seven acts, thinking they would be deemed the Seven Deadly Office Sins: 1. Stroking her leg during her coffee break; 2. Rubbing her leg under the table; 3. Repeatedly telling her: "Je t'aime"; 4. Giving her languorous looks; 5. Giving her suggestive looks; 6. Giving her a present on his return from a trip (the judge noted that two other women had also received presents); 7. Saying he missed her terribly when she was absent from the office.

However, the boss's gestures, ruled the judges, were simply seven SSSCs: "Simple signaux sociaux conventionnels" or "simple, conventional social signals". These have now entered jurisprudence as "permitted SSSCs". Or a male office charter.

The Douai ruling, highlighted this week in a leading law journal, has been greeted with despair by female activists who have been seeking a toughening of

recent laws, given the lenient manner in which many French judges have been treating sexual harassment cases.

"The ruling means that whatever pleases a man can be considered love," says Catherine le Magueresse, a jurist who heads the European Association Against Violence to Women in the Workplace in Paris.

"Verbal harassment is almost impossible to prove in court," she adds angrily. "More serious cases, leading sometimes to job loss, are also difficult because of the low priority given to sexual harassment in criminal policy."

Details were published recently in the news weekly *Marianne* about the alleged affairs of President Chirac and some of his predecessors, notably François Mitterrand, who was known all over Paris as a *lapin chaud*, or hot rabbit. They caused barely a ripple in political and social circles.

A recent French Prime Minister plucked the bottom of a British woman journalist in Paris — and that was before Boris Yeltsin sought to make the practice fashionable in Russia. The other day a female acquaintance told of a former French Foreign Minister rubbing her so hard under the table that her legs were blue by the time dessert arrived.

A parliamentary debate over legal texts led to the conclusion that there should not be legislation over "simple misunderstandings in social and professional life: only against scandalous practices".

A court in Versailles ruled recently that

passionate letters and love poems from one employer to his secretary showed only that he was "sentimentally distraught". A misunderstanding, in short.

Claude Katz, who has acted for women plaintiffs, says: "Without witnesses, these cases are very difficult to win. Anyway, judges say they do not want any 'American-style exaggeration'. These cases were, until recently, greeted with smiles from the bench."

The women's association against violence is financed by the Social Affairs Ministry of Martine Aubry, known as the second most powerful person in government. In addition, Elisabeth Guigou is currently Minister of Justice, but the wheels of reform turn exceedingly slowly in France. The public prosecutor throws out 80 per cent of cases before they reach court. Katz says he has won only one case for unlawful dismissal on sexual grounds in five years.

It's a cultural thing in France. The verb *draguer* indicates much more aggressive behaviour than "chatting up", its dictionary definition.

Still, even in France one cannot get away with the behaviour of a Besençon boss who went into his secretary's office naked. He was convicted. But in the case of Fabienne, the judges agreed with her boss, Edmond (under French privacy laws only their first names are given) that she had not been "humiliated" by his advances.

ALAN TILLER

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Mesh is my secret weapon

It has been an odd sort of winter — not a winter at all really, more a series of false dawns. In my back garden violets have been blooming since January. They look nervous, as well they might, because every so often, just as they are lifting their faces to the sun, there comes a spell of foul weather — bitter northeasterly winds, spats of driving rain.

It lasts for a few days — just long enough to spoil the velvety purple bloom — and then goes balmy. And if the flowers are disorientated by it — how about me?

Impossible to know what to wear. You start out for work in layers of cashmere, only to arrive peony-faced in an unexpected heatwave. Or else you go to the shops in jeans and a little cardigan and come back mauve-lipped with cold. But now, at last, the lilac buds are fat and there is blossom ready to burst on my crab apple.

In short, spring has really arrived and it is time I did something about my clothes.

Thrilling though the prospect of a lovely new wardrobe is, I am gripped, as always at the cusp of a season, by a peculiar sensation of resistance. I find myself looking through the fashion magazines and thinking, am I really going to wear this stuff? But where? And how? What if they laugh at me at the school gates?

It is an alarming prospect, but not half as worrying as the thought of missing out on the new season's look — even if it is described in terms that bring a lurch to the heart: pretty, fantasy, sheer, flirty or, as one magazine had it, "sultry Latin babes in kitsch ruffles, flounces, mega-sexy briefs and crotch-skimming skirts".

Well, I must say, there is nothing like the thought of a kitsch ruffle to make me reach for the Jean Seberg matelot top from Hobbs in which I spent last summer comfortably (and, I like to think, fetchingly) enveloped. But it seems a bit hopeless to give up without a fight.

Pretty, sheer, skimpy and so on are not madly easy to wear if one is over 25 (Prada's see-through plastic gothic blouse, with blood red seaming over the breasts, is one look that I shall probably refrain from attempting) — but not impossible, either.

The trick is to keep a sharp eye on the silhouette — almost imperceptible nuances of line can make the difference between an outfit that looks fresh and clever and one that looks tired. It is also a good idea to spend as much as possible on a really good layer: sheer and filmy have a tendency to look tragic on the unsupported figure, as any entertainer

ment awards might offer ample opportunity to observe. And lastly, keep in mind the inestimable virtues of a face-saving compromise.

In my case, this will mean that I shall not turn up to the school sports day in full-on Helena Christensen lingerie slip and cardie, much as I love the look. Instead, I shall fish out the pretty trio of skirts that I bought last summer in the Paddy Campbell sale, and give them a lift with my brilliant new secret weapon, the mesh T-shirt.

Mesh T-shirts are everywhere at the moment and I can see that by the end of the summer I am going to have hundreds of them. The range is vast — from Laura Ashley's maidens in navy cap-sleeved crochets with matching camisole, to D&G's shockingly desirable black mesh with a religious medal suspended from a lingerie bow.

In the high street Warehouse has a sophisticated black net top with brilliant Chinese flower embroidery, while Jane Norman's version echoes Vivienne Westwood, with delicious fat cherubs on a sky-blue background. Moschino's Cheap & Chic line, whose use

of subversive detail makes it possibly the only label to deserve that much abused fashion adjective, witty, has a perfect pair of crochets topped with navy, with crystal beading, the other white, with flower embroidery whose prettiness is just sufficiently calculated to be thoroughly wearable. I could go on... the great virtue of these little tops is that they are all so enticingly affordable.

For all my love of a high-street bargain, there is nothing quite like the comforting feel of a designer label at your back. So if I had to jettison all but one of my wish list, I would hang on to Matthew Williamson's sheer silk chiffon, with a single beaded peacock's feather on the front.

It costs £260, which, you may care to tell yourself, is half the price of a new washing machine — and a good deal more uplifting to the spirits.

CUTTING EDGE

JANE SHILLING



Take cover: crocheted T-shirt with Madonna heart icon by D & G, £69, Harvey Nichols (0171-235 5000)



Object of desire

For the woman who dresses in Calvin Klein, Donna Karan and Jil Sander — the minimalist with sleek, pared-down style — jewellery is a major statement. Hooreih Coish's necklaces and bangles are made from Plexiglas, polished aluminium, and threaded with opaque wiring, mirroring the dynamics of a suspension bridge. Suspension bangle by Hooreih Coish, approx £220. (01822 853670).

HOT TIP

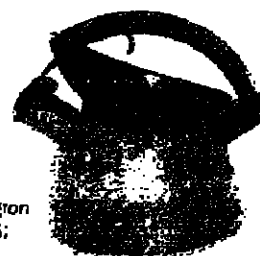
Puberty may be a distant nightmare, but women in their late twenties and even thirties are still prone to the occasional spot. And whatever your age, blemishes can make you feel self-conscious. Eve Lom Dynamite spot treatment, however, really works. Dynamite contains fennel, camomile, yarrow and tea tree oils that dry out spots while soothing and healing the skin. Eve Lom Dynamite, £14.50, from Dickens & Jones (0171-734 7070).

SIX OF THE BEST

Kettles are no longer boring white plastic tubs. They now come in a vast array of colours to co-ordinate with any interior. Here are six of the best.

GOOD GRIPS NAVY KETTLE, £40

With its trademark black rubberised easy-grip handles, this is a well designed kettle. A lever hidden under the handle means it can be opened without burning your fingers. From The Source, 26-30 Kensington High Street, W8 (0171-937 2626; 10/10)



BODUM COLOURED KETTLE, £29.99

This kettle comes in a vast array of semi-transparent coloured plastic, perfect for co-ordinating with any kitchen. It also comes in a smaller single-person size. From Graham & Green, 7 Elgin Crescent, W11 (0171-727 4594; 9/10)

RUSSELL HOBBS CHROME CORDLESS KETTLE, £54.99

One of the best traditional chrome electric kettles has been updated, leaving it sleek and modern. From department stores nationwide 10/10



ALESSI RED BIRD KETTLE, £75

This chrome kettle has a whistling bird on the spout — a quirky detail which adds a touch of humour. From The Conran Shop, 51 Fulham Road, London SW3 (0171-589 7401; 9/10)

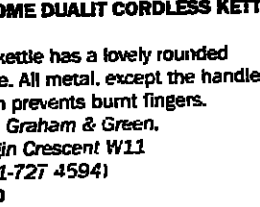
LE CREUSET RED KETTLE, £30.70

This red metal, cone-shaped kettle has a wonderful rustic appeal and could be used as a teapot. From Divertimenti, 45-47 Wignmore St, W1 (0171-935 0689; 9/10)



CHROME DUALIT CORDLESS KETTLE, £75

This kettle has a lovely rounded shape. All metal, except the handle which prevents burnt fingers. From Graham & Green, 7 Elgin Crescent W11 (0171-727 4594; 9/10)



MAIN IMAGE
Photographer: Ryan Sullivan; Stylist: Deborah Brett; Hair and make-up: Helen Bannan at Mandy Cookley; Model: Sarah Pritchard at Models One
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THE SUNDAY TIMES

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TIME COMPUTER SYSTEMS

A political class - who needs one?

John Lloyd on Europe and the end of representative democracy

Tony Blair will next week address the French Assembly, in what is likely to be a piquant occasion. For, in a parliament which owes its origins to a direct expression of protest, Mr Blair - the leader of a country which venerated the slow development of a political class - will stand as a seeker after ways of letting the people speak directly to, and have a direct influence on, the political structure. E.M. Forster's "only connect" could be his motto.

As he deliberately displayed last summer, Mr Blair is the most Euro-friendly British leader of modern times. He speaks French, shares his class and generation's affection for Tuscany, is publicly chummy with and respectful of Helmut Kohl, the German Chancellor, and admires the Dutch labour reforms. But he will be an awkward presence in a national assembly whose Socialist majority has been buoyed by relatively good results from regional elections. For he is not a socialist: he is highly sceptical of the French tradition of driving Europe through a Franco-German alliance of political elites - and he does not believe in a political class.

Like Europe new Labour has a democratic deficit

New Labour is redefining political leadership. It believes it is rewriting the book on democratic structures or at least revising it substantially. It is achieving this in Britain by using focus groups to develop ideas, referendums to secure assent for them and staging events - like the one held yesterday in a south London school by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, to discuss the Budget. The party believes this should be done in Europe. New Labour thinks European politicians have no clue about how to connect with Europeans.

Peter Mandelson, the Minister without Portfolio, a man whose thoughts and strategies move in concert with the Prime Minister's, took part in a seminar this month at the British Embassy in Bonn. It was a minor triumph for British diplomacy, attracting politicians of the rank of Wolfgang Schäuble, the Christian Democrat leader in the Bundestag; Rudolf Scharping, Herr Schäuble's Social Democrat counterpart; and Joschka Fischer, the leading Green.

Mr Mandelson gave the keynote address, in which he argued, shockingly to some of the Germans, that "it may be that the era of pure representative democracy is coming slowly to an end". There are many weasel words in that sentence - "may be", "pure" and "slowly". But he added unambiguously that the elites which had dominated politics - including the intellectual, trade union and local council elites which Labour developed this century - were of "an age that has passed away".

New Labour was, he said, responding to this change by using everything from the Internet to referendums. But Europe was not. "The bad news," said Mr Mandelson, the most pro-European of senior Labour figures, "is that

there is in practice a democratic deficit... as a means of closing it, the European Parliament has so far failed."

The two British Tories who took part in the seminar - David Willetts, the Shadow Employment spokesman and Robert Jackson - were charmed by this. Herr Schäuble was not, he said a political class was essential for leadership, especially where, in Germany as in Britain, the people were doubtful of a European currency which the political elite had decided was in their own best interests.

This is the core of the argument. I have heard it several times this month. I heard Kim Howells, the junior Education Minister, argue with Italian journalists that "the days of the old political class are over; you have to find new ways of doing politics or you'll become irrelevant". It was also expressed by one of British industry's grander captains, Niall Fitzgerald, the chairman of Unilever and of the CBI's Europe committee. He said in a speech in Brussels that "we have failed, quite simply, to earn popular understanding and support".

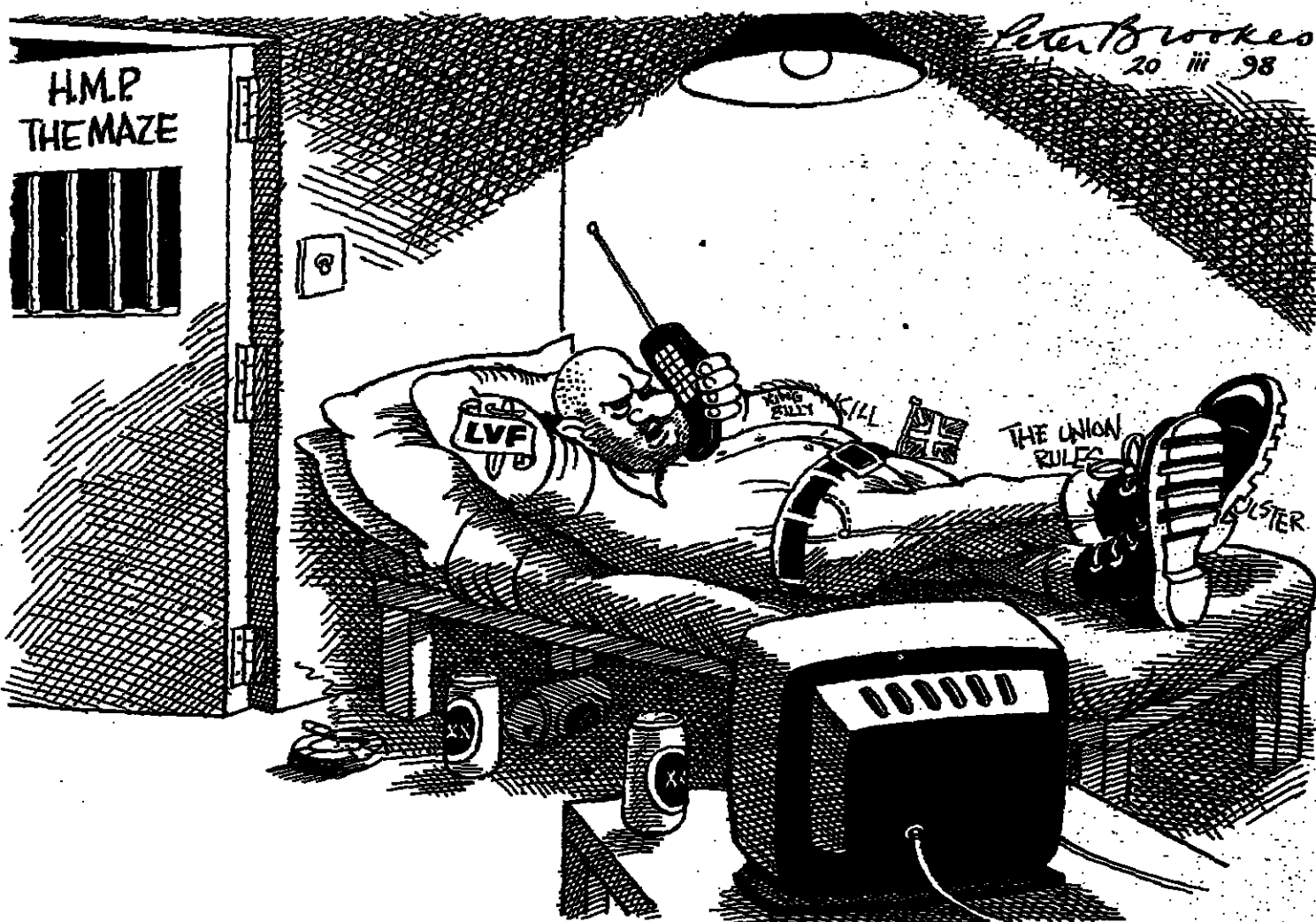
This is now the line of British pro-Europeans. It is a good one, for it puts them on the side of the people and buys the time they need to convince the British that greater integration is no threat. However, this line of argument has two flaws, which will become increasingly evident.

First, it ignores the continental debate, and suggests that Britain is the only state concerned about citizens' doubts. This is wrong. The German debate has been lively for years; the French one is now taking off; even in Europhile Italy the intellectual class has realised that "more Europe" can mean less of the protection the Italian state has offered since the 1960s.

More seriously, it throws into sharp relief the fact that new Labour has, if not a democratic deficit, then a democratic dilemma. If one abolishes the political elite, and puts faith in the Internet, referendums or pure charisma, how is leadership to be managed? What happens if the polls and the focus groups stay stubbornly hostile to the course of action the Government believes is necessary? Who spreads the message, if the political class has been downgraded and turns surly, refusing to mobilise the grassroots and to send messages via the synapses of civil society?

Indeed, the "end of representative democracy" poses a question mark over civil society itself. Did Mr Mandelson mean what he said, even with the qualifications? Presumably: here is a deliberate and very conscious politician. We are at the beginning of a long effort to connect us once more to politics, without the aid of an elite; an effort which will, sooner or later, pit government against parliament.

John Lloyd is associate editor of the New Statesman.



"THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT...THE FUTURE'S ORANGE."

A glimpse of what I fancy

Leonardo DiCaprio is the latest teenage idol, but we have all had our crushes

Like the policemen, the stars and starlets are getting younger. But, as with the policemen, this is only an illusion. We are getting older, and too quickly forget that Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio are only the present generation's answer to Olivia Hussey (15) and Leonard Whiting (17), whose bottom - we briefly glimpsed in Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Winslet and DiCaprio have real talent, but Whiting and Hussey never went far. Though Whiting did appear in *Frankenstein: The True Story* in 1973, neither he nor Hussey now make so much as an appearance in the *Biographical Dictionary of Film*. Yet for a year the romance of the movie and the titillation of the briefly explicit love scenes Zeffirelli risked, teased the popular imagination. Then there was John Travolta, who at 23 (DiCaprio's age) starred in *Saturday Night Fever*, and in the dreams of a million Seventies teenagers. What DiCaprio is doing now for the girlie (and, I suspect, a few boyish) pulses of the 90s, Mark Hamill - as Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars* - did for the pubescent fantasies of Thatcher's children. By *Return of the Jedi*, Luke's bloom had gone.

My own teenage crushes start with the early Sixties. I was only 13 when I developed a bit of a thing for Hayley Mills, who was 15 in *Where Pigeons Went*. Crazy this, but Audrey Hepburn as Holly Golightly in *Breakfast at Tiffany's* in 1961 stirred something in this (then) 12-year-old's breast that was not quite childish, though she must have been in her early 30s. Miss Hepburn was quickly supplanted in my dreams by Mick Jagger who as a physical type (and I cannot account for this) is bracketed in my mind with Hayley Mills.

Ah, Mick Jagger. Someone should make a systematic study of this. A quite remarkable number of men of my generation fancied him a bit, or a lot, when they were teenagers and many had posters near their beds. That includes quite a few who turned out to be heterosexual. I wonder whether Mick Jagger has the least idea how many people's fantasies he was occupying in the Sixties. There was something compellingly ambivalent about his appeal: sensual, almost animal, and yet oddly androgynous.

Each generation has its icons. My mother mentions a film star from the 1940s, Stewart Granger, in *Fanny by Gaslight* and *Love Story*. The name means nothing to me: none of that era

do; but there was a certain look about the male stars of the day. The men tended to be a little older; but the women were often very young. Now we remember the later Judy Garland, but it was the girlie Garland who first captured the public's imagination. My father mentions Dean Cain, who was 15 as he remembers her in *Three Smart Girls* in 1936, and 16 in *One Hundred Men and a Girl*. Dad would have been 14. She was hardly heard of after her twentieth birthday, and retired at 28.

It has struck me (and it may be no more than whimsy) that some of the male politicians of the 1980s who owed their prominence not only to their abilities but also to Margaret Thatcher's special personal regard - Richard Luce, the late Humphrey Atkins and Cecil Parkinson are examples - had something of the Forties matinee idol about them. She was a teenager in the 1940s. I wonder who first made her pulse race? She is most unlikely to say. I wonder, too, whether she realises how many innocent or saucy (but always private) male fantasies she has graced in her middle and later years. She never gave permission. Is it a kind of indecent assault to fantasise about someone without asking? I wonder whether she minds?

But the mid-life longings of the middle-aged intrigue me less than the first crush. I do mean crush, not affair, for this usually occurs before real relationships are entered upon or even planned. I mean the person we first fancied as an idea, an image, an icon - an impossible dream: the person who first stirred the child's or teenager's nascent sexuality.

This is usually from afar. It may be an idol of stage or screen, and, increasingly these days, it may be a television personality (how many young daydreams did Philip Schofield occupy?). For some reason I always fancied Nicholas Lyndhurst in *Only Fools and Horses* - but that came later. It may be a sporting hero: Henman, Agassi, Becker, Ivanisevic, Coe, Linaker, Ginola or (once, can you believe it?) George Best. Swimmers, before they started shaving their heads, swam through countless teenage fantasies.

Or it may be someone closer to home, yet still inaccessible. Captains of cricket at school, head boys, girls' netball team stars... there was a boy called Barry Gibson. I remember, at my high school in southern Rhodesia.

Or Tony Dawson, a middle-distance runner from St Mark's School in Mbabane, Swaziland. I saw him years later, serving behind the counter at the spare-parts department in a local garage; such a disappointment.

A colleague here at *The Times* tells me one of his fond first loves was Joan Fontaine, in *Rebecca*; for another it was Olivia Newton-John (when he was 14). He saw the film *Grease* three times.

Another blushing admits that for her it was David Essex - she made a special journey to see his film.

I shall not name these colleagues or you would never take political reports beneath their bylines seriously again, but they will be matched by men and women of even greater prominence and unimaginable dignity - judges, headmistresses, captains of industry, archbishops, the Baroness Warnock, even - whose pulses will once have fluttered to a glimpse of the Monkees, Kate Bush, Sean Bean, Donny Osmond or Marilyn Monroe, who will take to the grave their secret adolescent reveries involving Ricky Nelson, Pat Boone, Julie Christie, David Cassidy, Mary Hopkins or George Harrison.

As I write there will be boys (and maybe girls) who now shut their eyes and think of a particular Spice Girl. Peter Andre or someone from All Saints, who in 30 years time will be very grand, and will wine, or chuckle, or both, at the private recollection. Terence Stamp can have no more idea what he did for me in Pasolini's *Theorem* when I was 19, than the fellow who played Becket's young Saxon sidekick in *Becket* when I was 14. I was sure there was something between him and his Archbishop - or was I imagining?

Hepburn, Stamp and the Saxon sidekick represent for me, three templates. In the roles she played, Audrey Hepburn was feminine but without voluptuousness - a not-quite-ripened fruit; chirpy and brave, but with more than a hint of fragility. How often have I found myself faintly, residually, drawn to women who remind me of her! Which came first: my boyhood attraction to a female type whom Hepburn resembled - or my boyhood attraction to Hepburn, whose type then fixed itself in my imagination as an ideal to which I was forever drawn?

Stamp and the Saxon represent - at least in my mind's eye - almost the yin and yang of male sexuality. Stamp, playing a sort of destroying angel in *Theorem*, was dark, sensual, selfish and confident; the blond, blue-eyed Saxon, pale, intense and vulnerable, was the other side of the coin. Even today I may find myself powerfully drawn by a face or figure sitting across the aisle on the London Underground - and with a shock see the ghost of that Saxon, or the angel in *Theorem*, or Barry Gibson or Tony Dawson, in the person opposite.

There are men and women not yet born who, in two decades, will be stared at by a stranger with a sudden, transient, uncomprehending longing - and they will have their resemblance to what DiCaprio or Winslet are like now to thank for that. Hugh Grant has improved the marriage prospects of a million floppy-haired, sappy-faced and slightly indecisive-looking young men.

My guess is that to take root in our fantasies, a real person has to resemble something after which we already hanker; but if they do, they may - by giving it definition - fix, amplify and make permanent the hankering. In Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* a dentist stuck with his practice in Latin America reflects sorrowfully that a discarded dental impression he found as a child, and was fascinated by, was what started it all.

Years from now, today's adolescents will be laying flowers, writing valentines, facing heartaches, making vows, staring longingly at strangers... and thinking that is their choice. But, all unknowing, Winslet, DiCaprio, Mel C, and Robbie Williams, or somebody on *Home and Away*, are even now making those choices for them.

Philip Howard



So long, guys: showdown at the Times Corral, OK?

Fear of flitting is a strong neurosis. The word "flit" has Nordic roots. It was a favourite in the vocabulary of Chaucer and writers two centuries before Geoffrey, especially in the idiom of "a moonlight flit", traditionally done in order to avoid paying the rent. Today it is still current in Scotland but obsolescent in the South. I suffer from chronic fear of flitting. As a small boy off to boarding school for the first time and afraid, I buried a sapphire in a secret place as a talisman if I ever returned home again.

Moving offices is even worse than moving house. And moving a newspaper office is the most terrible of all, because it has to be done overnight while still producing tomorrow's paper on the run - a literal moonlight flit. Today is our last day in our old office. It is strange that I should feel nostalgia for the Wapping run, warehouses for the Port of London. We grumbled often enough about its lack of windows and natural light and the sense that every breath of air had been through 30 other bodies before yours. It is the wrong shape for a modern newspaper office, being long and narrow so that those at the sharp end are out of touch with those at the blunt end a quarter of a mile away. Like any newspaper office, it is untidy with paper mountains that we dare not throw away in case they come in useful one day.

And yet this old shed housed us for 11 years of our working lives. We walked through pickets for a year to get here. On the first day I carried in an aspirin as a security blanket and home comfort. And a woman, wag the picket line shouted at me: "What're you going to do with that, Taran? Climb it?" And that, Taran? Climb it? And already, because most of us have already flitted across to our smart new office, the old place is as melancholy as a ghost town in the Old West. Untended fax machines spew out the tumbleweed of unread faxes to be blown around by the Chinooks and prairie blizzards of the air-conditioning. Disconnected computer screens stand in rows like saguaros in the Arizona desert, but they still seem to hum like distant coyotes. The design editor in his Mackinaw shirt, who is also one of our last Hurrah party to leave, looks like the Sheriff of Tombstone himself, with the cantankerous Peter Brookes as his Deputy, silent in the white neon light of our empty noonday street.

So just as cowpokes have their Spinal philosophy of life, "Don't squat with yer spurs on", we poor hacks must stiffen the sinews and summon up the blood for tonight's flit. We should adapt cowboy lore. "There's two theories to arguin' with a woman: neither of them work." The same applies with knobs on to sub-editors and the Einsteins who work the computer tonight. Do not pack all your treasures in the last wagon in the train because that is the one the Redskins will get. Journo's Law decrees that one packing case will be lost while flitting and that will be the one that matters. I put all my eggs, talismans, talismans, postcards, statuette of naked lady, miniature sundial for an office where the sun never shines and other office comforts into one crate. And guess which one has not turned up. It will, it MUST. It even contains the scissors necessary to open the other crates. "Never smack a man who's chewin' tobacco." For us, the saxon is never to interrupt a man who is writing to deadline. He/she has blinkers on and will not hear. "Never miss a good chance to shut up."

Cowpoke: "Never kick a fresh turd on a hot day." For us that translates as do not start piling books on to shelves before making sure that the shelves are fastened to the wall. Always drink upstream from the herd, and always sleep with your boots on where you have eaten your T-bone and beans round the campfire. I have tried out the showers in the gents in our smart new building, and blundered up my Arthritis and other treasured posters to make the place look more like home, home on the screen, where the sub-editors and the feature writers play. The fear of flitting is intense. I shall bury a coin in a crevice of the old warehouse, to make sure that I may come back one day, as I have in schools, colleges, barracks, houses and offices all my life. Just for flitting. If you're flitting ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it's still there.

Grave concern

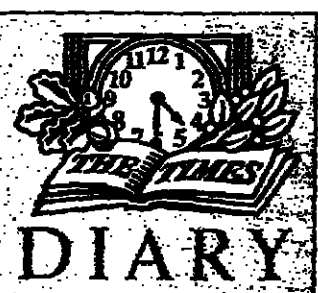
THE Charity Commission is looking into a complaint about an alleged misuse of funds by a religious organisation headed by a senior figure in the House of Lords. Viscount Allenby of Meggido, who is effectively a whip for cross-bencher peers, is the patron of the British-Israel-World Federation. The charity believes that "without doubt British people are descended from the House of Israel and bear the marks of God's chosen people, as defined in the Bible". Its literature states: "Concerning the identification of Israel today, the Scripture record clearly indicates their name shall be great - Great Britain". While the Charity Commission lets the federation "prove" Britain is really Israel, it is looking into a complaint about the use of funds to uncover King Arthur's grave. "There is a question as to whether this is proper," says the commission, which is receiving co-operation from the charity.

Allenby, whose grandfather Field Marshal Edmund Allenby captured Jerusalem in 1917, said he had become involved in the charity because an ancestor had helped it. "I was slightly under a misconception. I thought the federation aimed to produce better links between Christians and Jews," says Allenby (pictured with King Arthur). "I said I would get involved if I didn't have to do any work. If the commission said the charity had been disreputable, I would want an explanation."

● PRINCE CHARLES is getting into car boot sales. His Prince's Trust is organising the biggest ever sale in Essex (where else?). To open the show he has acquired the services of Lauren Booth, whose profile now seems even higher than that of her sister, Cherie Blair.

Flawed floors

IS THE Lord Chancellor creaking under the weight of his own grandeur? I ask having heard that the floor in Lord Irvine of Lairg's magnificent new apartments have been reinforced. This, of course, would prevent an awkward incident, such as one of his many newly acquired sculptures, Narcissus for instance, crashing through the old floorboards. But despite the seniority of my informant, an adviser to the renovation says Irvine has an alternative solution: "We have had special planks made to spread the weight. The marble sculptures are extremely heavy. Workers downstairs would be most unhappy if these landed on their heads."



● A NEW generation of Churchills is set to revive the ailing political dynasty. Sir Winston's great-grandson, Duncan Sandys, 24, will try to break into the Labour stronghold of Millbank as a Tory councillor at the May elections. "I believe I am the first of my generation to go into politics," says the

banker, thought to be contemplating a career in Parliament. "I want to improve life for many of the residents of Millbank." Including, I trust, Blair's helpers in the Tower.

Trusted friend

TONY BLAIR'S political mentor has landed a job, courtesy of Frank Dobson, Health Secretary. He will become chairman of an NHS Trust. Paul Trippett, who helped to secure Blair's surprise selection in the Sedgefield seat in 1983 and runs the local Labour club, heads the



South Durham Health Care Trust (pay: up to £30,000). Does the trust feel this was politically motivated? "It is a matter for Frank Dobson. He approved the candidate." "Jobs for the boys" says John Maples, Dobson's Shadow, who demands that he reopen nominations. Trippett, who joined the PM on his return to Sedgefield after the election, will not be lonely. One Kevin Earley, a fellow Labour councillor, runs the North Durham Trust.

● PRINCE Albert of Monaco, who has enjoyed a strangely prolonged bachelorhood, is hinting that he

may at last have met his ideal mate. It sounds deep. Says the Prince, pictured with an earlier candidate, Claudia Schiffer: "If things develop as I hope they will, there is a real possibility it will be serious." Monaco will be relieved.

Booked up

AT LAST, silence from the home of Jilly Cooper. Normally a social mecca during Cheltenham, the pulp-fictionalist has banished guests so she can finish her latest work, *Who Killed Mr Ronald?* "The house is usually full of yahoos," says husband, Leo. "They always get drunk and are sick."

● THE aroma of caviare and champagne has lured foxes from their rural lair to Chelsea. Among those to have had his bins pawed is Wendy, Lady Caledon. Happily, she has no plans to stake them out with a twelve bore. "They're lovely," she says. "I want them to stay."



JASPER GERARD

Track record

LABOUR have hunted the mole that let the Diary break the story last month that Tony Blair would be censured for failing to register his Silverstone jaunt. My source says secret, but I can say that there was barely a voice raised in defence of the PM. Labour or Tory, through no conspiracy.



FIGHTING ABROAD

Cook's stance should be seen in context

While Lord Chancellors recline in Pugin luxury, Labour Chancellors of the Exchequer are supposed to occupy beds of nails. When Lord Callaghan was at Number Eleven he had to carry the can for devaluation. Lord Jenkins was blamed for losing the 1970 election by preferring prudence to profligacy and Lord Healey was humiliated by his own party conference for taking the IMF's medicine for the British disease. Gordon Brown, however, seems to have bucked this trend. Although his ten months in the Treasury have not been without squalls the last week has been remarkably successful.

His budget has won praise from almost all quarters. He has, it is true, inherited a sparkling economy but he has not squandered his good fortune. Mr Brown's success will only add to the annoyance of his greatest rival, the Foreign Secretary Robin Cook. Mr Cook has had an uncomfortable seven days. His trip to the Middle East has given his critics fresh stones to pelt him with. Mr Cook finds consolation in friends and the turf but he should also take some from history. It has been foreign policy, as much as the economy, which has given past Labour leaderships sleepless nights.

The desire to use the international stage to strike ethical attitudes has been as great a cause of contention for the Left as domestic arguments. The last Labour government to come to office on the back of a landslide, Clement Attlee's in 1945, was also committed to austerity initially but the issues which precipitated the greatest divisions were foreign policy matters. The Labour Government's handling of Palestine, and its support for the US in the Cold War, not least in Korea, all unsettled backbenchers.

The most damaging split of the Attlee Government, the resignation of Nye Bevan, Harold Wilson and John Freeman over the imposition of charges for dentures and spectacles, was at root a foreign policy dispute. The charges were levied to help pay

for the rearmament required to fight the Korean War and maintain other commitments. Bevan believed British foreign policy should be ethical in one sense — steering a principled course between the power blocs of East and West. His opponent, the Chancellor, Hugh Gaitskell, believed foreign policy should be ethical in another sense, firm in its opposition to Communist tyranny. The struggle between the two became the defining cleavage of the Labour Party in the Fifties, with Bevan's unilateralism the stance by which the Left defined itself.

Harold Wilson managed to avoid a significant split over Vietnam but while he played the Cold War skilfully he could not avoid divisions over Europe. Forced to concede a referendum to keep his Cabinet together, he only delayed the SDP's departure. In the Eighties, during Labour's other long stretch in the wilderness, both unilateralism and membership of the EEC provoked the bitterest divisions between comrades. The Bennites were economic radicals but their argument with the party's Centre and Right was fought on traditional territory — abroad.

Robin Cook was a combatant in those struggles. Now, however, the former member of CND and resolute anti-marketier is a vigorous supporter of American action against Iraq and the EU's willing advocate on the West Bank. He retains, nevertheless, the attachment to treating diplomacy as an ethical crusade which is the mark of the Left. A naturally partisan man, Mr Cook has the defects of his virtues. His abrasive style is a marked departure from the subtleties of Lords Carrington and Hurd. Such grandstanding may be in keeping with the Labour Left's ancestral pieties but it also risks creating divisions at home and making Britain appear inept abroad. His apparent inability to master the right tone seems certain to create future difficulties for the Prime Minister. Mr Cook has made his bed, but it is Mr Blair who must lie in it.

UNIMPEACHABLE LOGIC

Clinton's fate may depend on Gingrich's calculations

The latest allegations broadcast against President Clinton have followed a familiar pattern of sensation, denial, counter-attack and opinion poll analysis. Those surveys suggest that Americans are inclined to think that President Clinton has been involved in sexual misconduct but are reluctant to press matters further. A solid 63 per cent approve of the President's performance in office despite the fact that an even stronger proportion — 66 per cent — believe that Mr Clinton lacks high personal and ethical standards. Kathleen Willey's televised interview does not seem to have altered matters much. It is little wonder that most observers still assume that Mr Clinton will survive.

It is not the task of Kenneth Starr, the independent counsel, to be swayed by such numbers. The current wave of depositions and subpoenas is likely to represent the last stage of his investigation. Once he has presented the remaining relevant characters — not least Mr Clinton himself — before his Grand Jury he will probably seek to wrap up the evidence. This may mean that he then invites Congress to consider possible impeachment. The US Constitution places responsibility for this process primarily with the House of Representatives. It will thus be Newt Gingrich who determines the Republican response.

Mr Gingrich has shown little enthusiasm for pursuing the President. His caution is only partly shaped by Mr Clinton's popularity. The White House is coasting on the strength of the American economy. Mr Clinton's standing is hardly secure when it is so closely linked to an economic boom that will slow at some point soon. However, Mr Gingrich will know that impeachment may

damage Congress as well as the President. It is also not in his interests to elevate Albert Gore to the Oval Office.

Mr Starr's detailed examination of the Whitewater affair may ultimately mean nothing. Whatever he has discovered, the Democrats will argue that the incidents concerned have long since passed. They will say further that such issues are inevitably complex and that the Clintons may have unknowingly and unwittingly broken the law. The President's associates will note that Mr Clinton is not the only senior American politician whose finances require some explanation. It will be asserted that Mr Clinton is entitled to the presumption of innocence. That should mean a trial after he has left office not ejection from it. In the interim, the President should be allowed to continue unhindered. Little of this has real legal weight but it may prove to be politically persuasive.

One factor, though, could upset all these calculations. The sexual harassment lawsuit brought by Paula Jones against the President had been considered an embarrassing distraction but not a potential disaster. A conviction was thought highly improbable in the absence of witnesses. The emergence of Mrs Willey may alter that assumption. An adverse verdict would imply that the President was a sexual predator who had systematically lied on oath and intimidated witnesses to protect himself. Mr Gingrich could hardly resist conservative demands for impeachment and liberal Democrats would swiftly abandon Mr Clinton. The White House will do its utmost to discredit Mrs Willey's testimony. She, not Mr Starr, may be the real threat to the President.

EAGER FOR BEAVERS

We should welcome the return of the native

The antiquated coat of an unpolitically-correct patrician is the nearest most of us have ever got to a beaver. This paddle-tailed rodent was hunted to extinction in Britain some 400 years ago. But now, after a five year study, plans are in progress to reintroduce it to Scotland. A public consultation exercise was launched yesterday. If its proposals are welcomed, the beaver's return will follow the successful reintroduction to the Scottish wilds of the magnificent sea eagle and the graceful red kite.

Once *Castor fiber*, the European or true beaver (slightly smaller than its American cousin), was prized for its dense, glossy pelt and its mild meat. The castoreum, or scent glands, located under its tail were a precious source of musk and of salicylic acid — an invaluable ingredient of medieval hangover cures. Now beavers will be treasured for their contribution to the environment. They are nature's conservationists.

The dam which a beaver builds to protect the entrance of its lodge helps to conserve water and to prevent stream bed erosion by steadying and moderating the flow. By creating sediment traps, it purifies the stream and reduces acidity, since silt neutralises the acid in the water. Pondlife thrives in the standing pools, providing a rich source of food for fish, while local wading birds not only raise the level of the water but also create a swampy environment ideal for the nesting of wetland birds.

such as snipe or waterfowl. Otters, voles and dragonflies also flourish in such areas.

Being herbivorous, the beaver feeds on aquatic vegetation. It relishes young waterlily shoots. In winter it uses its incisors to gnaw the bark of such broadleaf trees as willow, poplar and birch. But preferring the slimmer branches — typically those three or four centimetres in diameter — its rodent nibblings amount more to coppicing than felling. They help stimulate growth.

The Forestry Commission have already backed schemes to reintroduce the beaver. At present only the fishermen seem wary. They fear that dams will interfere with the migratory journeys of spawning trout and salmon. However, the European beaver builds much smaller structures than its North American counterpart. Fish can leap them. In the 14 European countries into which the beaver has already been reintroduced — including the intensively farmed Netherlands — there have, as yet, been no complaints. Rather, these fascinating rodents prove a strong focus for eco-tourism.

The British should now pave the way for the return of a native to its traditional landscape. The populations of beaver, once wiped out by man, should be nurtured. And if there are those who fear that the species might run out of control, its natural predators could always be re-introduced: the wolves and the lynxes and bears which once roamed the wilds of the Caledonian forest?

Row over Cook's Israel diplomacy

From the Director of the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding

Sir, Your leading article, "Diplomatic disaster" (March 18; see also letter, March 19), strangely puts the blame for the British-Israeli row on the shoulders of Robin Cook. Strangely because it was Binyamin Netanyahu who at the last moment decided to take issue with Cook's visit to the illegal settlement at Har Homa near Jerusalem when Israeli officials have been aware of this visit for weeks.

It was the Israeli Prime Minister who chose to raise his objections in public, in an unsubtle, undiplomatic fashion, presumably for domestic party-political reasons. The Israeli Government needs to explain why they reacted so vehemently to Robin Cook's visit when Derek Fatchett, the UK Minister of State, visited the settlement last May and met with Palestinian officials without this Israeli trade.

Cook's objection to the illegal settlement was completely in line with the long-standing British, EU and international position on Jerusalem: that it is occupied territory and that the Israeli settlements are illegal. Moreover, his Middle East tour was undertaken with the complete agreement of all the 15 EU foreign ministers.

More importantly this settlement has proved a major obstacle to the peace process, and the obstinate Israeli refusal to agree to time-out on settlement building has held up negotiations for months. Netanyahu's aggressive tactics towards the EU had one clear objective to undermine any attempt by the EU to have a part in the peace process. Such bullying tactics should not be allowed to bear fruit.

Yours faithfully,
CYRIL TOWNSEND,
Director,
Council for the Advancement
of Arab-British Understanding,
21 Collingham Road, SW5 0NU,
March 19.

From Sir Alan Munro

Sir, Your leader today sets the sharp Israeli reaction to Mr Cook's high-profile visit to the disputed Jebel Abu Ghneim (Har Homa) settlement site on a par with the predictable reaction here were an Israeli political figure to challenge British sovereignty during a visit to Northern Ireland. The comparison is a false one.

Political arguments apart, the legal fact of British sovereignty in Northern Ireland is recognised internationally. Israel's claim to sovereignty over Arab East Jerusalem on the other hand results from a unilateral act of annexation. Its status in the eyes of the international community, including the European Union and not denied by the United States, remains that of occupied territory over which Israel has no legal sovereignty.

Moreover, the distinction is reinforced by the fact that the Har Homa site is technically part of the occupied West Bank. It was incorporated into Jerusalem by an arbitrary expansion of the city's municipal boundary.

Yours sincerely,
ALAN MUNRO,
41 Upper Grosvenor Street, W1X 0LP,
March 18.

Headmaster's death

From Mrs Angela Lloyd

Sir, I was very sorry to read (report, March 14) that Philip Lawrence's successor, Mrs Margaret Ryan, has stopped the school commemorating the anniversary of his death.

A "special service" is what the whole nation is offered on November 11 each year, when those who died for their country are commemorated. A special service is held annually in many schools to honour those who founded them. Surely it is at least as important to remember and pray for a headmaster who stood by his principles and gave his life to safeguard his pupils?

Mrs Ryan does not believe education is about "dwelling in the past", yet if we and our children are not to learn from experience, what is there left to teach us?

Yours faithfully,
ANGELA LLOYD,
Home Farm, The Green,
Foxton, Cambridge CB2 6ST.

A step up?

From Mrs Eileen Glue

Sir, Nicholas Wood and Michael Gove report that the Chancellor still wants to be Prime Minister (March 14). When Mr Blair is president, perhaps?

Yours sincerely,
EILEEN GLUE,
18 Late Broads, Winsley,
Bradford on Avon BA15 2NW.

Passive resistance

From Mr Donald M. Watson

Sir, The recent press coverage of royalty and of passive resistance makes me wonder if the days of the Loyal Toast are numbered?

Yours faithfully,
D. M. WATSON,
Knockbain, Tongland Road,
Kirkcudbright, DG6 4UT,
March 16.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Support from public purse essential to future of science

From Professor D. J. Dunstan

Sir, I was pleased to see your mark Science Week with a leading article ("Selling science", March 14), and much of what you say is correct. However, you state: "We need more scientific entrepreneurs, not more researchers preying on the public purse."

Do we, indeed? I need say little about scientific entrepreneurs — Will Self, giving "Sir Clive Sinclair an ear-bashing" in the Magazine on the same day, said enough. If you want gadgets, then you want Sir Clive Sinclair or one of the many mail order catalogues. If, however, you want economic growth and steadily rising living standards, you need researchers who, in the nature of things, must prey off the public purse.

We have been fortunate to have had two centuries with about 2 per cent annual growth in GDP per head and steadily rising living standards. There is a good case that this has been entirely due to research and development in science and engineering. The great scientists and engineers who have created this economic growth have without shame preyed on the public purse.

From Sir Isaac Newton (Master of the Royal Mint) to Michael Faraday (Royal Institution), to the scientists and engineers who brought us optical fibre telecommunications (Southampton University and the Post Office Research Laboratory), the Internet and the World Wide Web (European and US government laboratories), there has scarcely been one scientific entrepreneur. Almost all have been in government employment, in academia or in the few large companies that can support R&D laboratories.

You also say that "Science must learn to be more self-supporting; then it would be more deserving of support". This is a mean-spirited comment.

Science has, as you say, brought the modern world into being. Science has created most of its productive capacity. Yet science must hang its head in shame, for wanting a tiny proportion

of what it has produced, to provide for future growth.

Yours sincerely,
D. J. DUNSTAN,
Physics Department,
Queen Mary and Westfield College,
University of London, E1 4NS,
d.dunstan@qmw.ac.uk
March 16.

From Dr Stuart Spencer

Sir, Although I agree in large part with your comments on funding for science, public funding for fundamental research will remain essential. You are right, however, to raise the failure of public sector research reaching the markets.

The experiment in New Zealand, for example, of making state-owned corporations carry out government research, is clearly a disaster, but a successful strategy may be found in the Antipodes. The positive tax incentives offered by the Australian Government have encouraged real investment in research and development. Often the costs of the tax concessions are balanced by the resulting increased employment and dynamism generated within local economies. There are also benefits to the rest of the economy in terms of local skill bases, human capital and familiarity with technology.

If we capitalise on our science base by re-focusing government support towards R&D in industry, the Australian precedent suggests that the net cost to the Exchequer may well be even less than it is at present.

Yours etc,
STUART SPENCER,
2 Woodborough Drive, Winscombe,
North Somerset BS25 1HA.

From Mr Trevor Sidebottom

Sir, Whilst I support the plea by the President of the Institute of Physics et al (letter, March 11) for increased government investment in fundamental science, strong science is only part of the answer to economic growth. So often in the UK we fail to convert good science into commercial success. In aerospace, the bridge between research and saleable products is pro-

vided by underinvestment and privatisation.

In addition, even the most flexible public transport services can never match the freedom, flexibility, comfort and safety of the car. Public transport is instead often a filthy, unsafe, unreliable and inflexible shambles. It is little wonder that people use their cars.

Given the considerably greater proportion of noxious emissions from power generation, domestic, commercial and industrial sources, it seems strange that nothing was done to target these areas.

The ABD believes that car taxes should be ring-fenced and spent on improving the UK's road network — not used as a stick to drive motorists out of their cars and onto an inadequate public transport system.

Yours sincerely,
M. MCARTHUR-CHRISTIE,
Campaigns Manager,
Association of British Drivers,
160 Farmer's Close,
Witney, Oxfordshire OX8 6NS,
March 18.

Business letters, page 33

Budget tax on drivers

From the Campaigns Manager of the Association of British Drivers

Sir, The Association of British Drivers believes the attacks on drivers in the Budget were both unreasonable and unnecessary (details, March 18). Ordinary drivers are already paying over £1,200 each in car taxes every year.

The total tax take from road users now accounts for £1 in every £8 of public expenditure, a take of £24 billion a year from drivers, only £9 billion of which is reinvested in roads and transport.

The increases in fuel duty will hit the most vulnerable in society particularly hard. The elderly, the disabled and those in rural areas who rely on their cars will now be forced to pay more.

Many drivers have no option but to use their cars to travel to work. To tax them for using their only viable method of transport is inequitable. There are many drivers who feel that they are being targeted for easy revenue raising.

The proposed spending on public transport will have little or no real impact on the transport network after

Farmyard brains

From Dr M. Mendl

Sir, The main reason for our studies at Bristol University on the memory and social intelligence of the pig did not come across clearly in your report (March 9; leading article, same day; letter, March 12). It is that improved knowledge of these areas is needed to improve the welfare and productivity of pigs on farms.

For example, sows are usually housed in groups during pregnancy but when they give birth they are separated from their group mates for four or five weeks to raise their piglets. On reintroduction to their group, there is often fighting between these previously familiar sows which results in injuries and other welfare problems.

Why should these familiar animals

fight? One possibility is that memory of group mate identity has faded during the separation period and so the animals treat each other as being unfamiliar. We need to understand how memory in pigs fades across time, and what features of the environment speed up or slow down this process, in order to be able to suggest ways of alleviating this problem.

Much of the work is being carried out in collaboration with Professor Richard Byrne at St Andrews University, who is an expert in the study of intelligence in apes.

Yours sincerely,
MIKE MENDEL,
Department of Clinical
Veterinary Science,
University of Bristol,
Langford, Bristol BS40 5DU,
March 12.

From Mr Les Sharp

Sir, I was born in Hackney — Clapton to be more precise — near enough to the East End for me to take great exception to Mr Charles Spencer's derogatory comments about the "lumpen" non-immigrant population of that area.

If I had written a letter containing similar comments about the Jewish population, it is highly unlikely that you would have published it.

If you had done, would Mr Spencer have considered it fair comment, or would he have accused us of anti-Semitism?

Yours faithfully,
LES SHARP,
2 Green Lane,
Walton-on-Thames,
Surrey KT12 5HD,
March 18.

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ing new technologies through the use of large-scale experimental (or demonstrator) programmes.

Both the National Audit Office (1996) and the House of Commons Trade and Industry Committee (1993) highlighted the value of demonstrators in reducing costs, risks and development timescales, yet the level of demonstrator-funding by the Government has fallen steadily in the last decade. Even though the Government's Foresight defence and aerospace panel has called for this funding to be restored, the Department of Trade and Industry's Civil Aircraft Research and Demonstration (Carad) programme has been reduced to just £20 million a year from close to £100 million a decade ago.

The picture overseas is very different. Our competitor nations recognise the value to their communities of investments in aerospace innovation in terms of jobs, the environment and other spin-offs. For example, current proposals could save 6,000 gallons of fuel on each transatlantic crossing of a typical 350-seat airliner and reduce the impact on the environment by 20 per cent.

The global aerospace industry will continue to grow rapidly and the necessary technology will be developed somewhere in the world. But will the UK benefit? Without government investment the trend for large UK companies to move research and demonstration to more benign funding environments overseas will accelerate. The result will be the decline of one of the UK's last world-class industries, with detrimental effects on employment and the balance of payments.

Investments should be found both from industry and public sources. We need the Government to recognise this need and play its part to ensure that society does not lose the opportunity for innovation in aerospace to deliver a better future.

Yours faithfully,
TREVOR SIDEBOTTOM
(Director, Corporate Services),
The Society of British
Aerospace Companies Ltd,
60 Petty France, SW1H 9EU,
March 13.

Naval heroes

From Dom Alberic Stacpoole

Sir, It was good to see the tribute in your obituary of Commander Clive Gwinnett (March 13) to Captain "Johnnie" Walker, coming shortly after the news (report, March 9) that a lifetime bronze statue is to be raised to Walker at Liverpool's Pier Head, the departure point for most of his 2nd Escort Group convoy crossings.

S. W. Roskill's *The War at Sea* vol. III (HMSO 1960) has a portrait of Walker and a photo of HMS *Magpie* entering Gladstone Dock on February 1944, where huge crowds turned out in anticipation of his return. He died of exhaustion at the end of the war, after winning four DSOs.

But in Roskill's vol. II is a photo page of two "Famous Escort Group Leaders". Below indeed is Captain F. J. Walker and HMS *Starling*. But above is Commander P. W. Gretton and HMS *Duncan*.

He was almost as illustrious, working from Londonderry, winning three DSOs and an OBE. He retired as a vice-admiral, Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff, "Sir Peter". His son Michael, also a vice-admiral, has just retired.

My plea is that the two greatest escort group commanders of the war, Walker and Gretton, should have statues that share one plinth.

Yours faithfully,
A. J. STACPOOLE,
Ampleforth Abbey, York YO6 4EN,
March 13.

Silent majority?

From Mr Nicholas Russell

Sir, To save a lot of time and trouble could someone produce a list of those members of the White House staff who have not been sexually involved with President Clinton?

I note (report, March 17) that a former "Miss America" has denied having a relationship with Mr Clinton and also denied that he offered her jobs in exchange for her silence.

I assume there must be some others.

Yours sincerely,
NICHOLAS RUSSELL,
37 School Lane,
Haslingfield,
Cambridge CB3 7JL,
user@larmprinters.bdx.co.uk
March 17.

Millennium bug

From Mr Keith Robinson

Sir, It seems, to my relief, that millennium bug remedies are being sought from minds more advanced than ours.

A question from the podium at a recent corporate event: "Is there any one here from the year two thousand?"

Yours faithfully,
KEITH ROBINSON,
The Wilderness,
Coronation Road, Littlewick Green,
Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 3RA,
the.robinsons@btinternet.com
March 18.

OBITUARIES

REAR-ADMIRAL CHARLES SHEPHERD

Rear-Admiral Charles Shepherd, CB, CBE, Deputy Controller Polaris, 1971-73, died on February 24 aged 80. He was born on December 10, 1917.

Charles Shepherd was one of a small but not insignificant number of naval officers who achieved admiral's rank "at through the hawsehole" — that is to say they originally joined up as naval ratings. The son of a naval stoker, he started as an engineering artificer apprentice in 1933. The final 12 years of his career as a captain and rear-admiral were intimately bound up with the birth of Britain's seaborne nuclear deterrent.

In the early 1960s the impending cancellation of the American air-to-surface nuclear missile Skybolt, a weapon destined for Britain's V-bombers, by the US Defence Secretary Robert McNamara led to what became known as the Nassau Agreement made between Harold Macmillan and President Kennedy in December 1962. The Royal Navy would obtain the Polaris ballistic missile weapon system and fit it to a newly-built class of four large nuclear-powered submarines. American assistance was conditional upon the dedication of the British force to Nato; it could also be "available for national use in times of emergency".

Rear-Admiral (later Vice-Admiral) Sir Hugh Mackenzie was assigned to manage the whole Polaris project on Boxing Day 1962. As Chief Polaris Executive, he had to set up the management systems and then control a project of novel size, cost and complexity, one which did not rest easily among the established equipment procurement structures.

Charles Shepherd was appointed director of the weapon system aspects, and had to master all its intricacies, its integration with a new type of British submarine and, most important, to set up all the requirements for civilian and naval training. Mackenzie wrote: "This was the most daunting task of all, only to be accomplished by an able and dedicated team which he set up remarkably quickly."

Technical challenges abounded. The UK was to manufacture its own warheads and re-entry vehicles (the "nose-cone"); the design of the selected class of Polaris was not finalised. A battery of management techniques, more familiar today than then, were imported: configuration control, programme evaluation and review, network analysis, programme manage-



ment plans and critical path scheduling.

Yet, singular among major postwar defence projects, Polaris came in on time and within budget. Shepherd was fond of remarking that back in 1963 they planned to fire the first test missile from a submarine at 1115 hours, Eastern Standard Time, on February 15, 1968, and failed by 15 milliseconds. And after six years of fearsome pressure created by the obsolescence of the V-bomber force, Resolution, the Royal Navy's first ballistic missile submarine, arrived in its patrol area in July 1968.

Shepherd recalled creating his own furrow in the sky as he flew back and forth over the Atlantic to consult the Americans. When the time came for personnel changeovers, Admiral Mackenzie considered Shepherd to be

irreplaceable and took special measures to retain him for the full span of getting Polaris into service, receiving assurances that Shepherd's prospects would not suffer thereby. This longevity, coupled to his expertise, caused him to be regarded by the Americans as Britain's "Mr Polaris".

As a practical engineer who was ruthless in his appraisal and removal of the useless, he formed a particularly warm attachment to Americans and conceived a lifelong admiration for their generosity and skill. His particular contribution was characterised by brainpower, drive and fierce discipline. People suggesting British "wibbly" (wouldn't it be better if...) reactions to the American system got short shrift.

Promoted rear-admiral in 1970 and appointed to lead the whole project as Deputy Controller of the Navy (Polar-

is), he oversaw the acceptance of the fourth submarine, *Revenge*, into service and the first refit of *Resolution* in Rosyth dockyard. He retired in 1974 after 12 years in the programme, having been appointed CBE in 1968 and CB in 1972.

Charles William Haimes Shepherd was educated at the Public Central School, Plymouth, from where he went to the naval apprentice school, HMS Figsdard. But, although passing out top of his class in 1937, he was not accepted on his first attempt at promotion to midshipman. But in July 1940, after the required examinations, he was made a sub-lieutenant, eventually qualifying as an advanced engineer.

In later years he recalled his time as an Engine Room Artificer 5th Class in the ill-fated First World War vintage battleship *Repulse* as "very, very hard — conditions even in the Chief's Mess were awful. Pay was poor and I was in love". Since *Repulse* was later sunk in company with the battleship *Prince of Wales* by Japanese aircraft off Singapore, with the loss of almost half her ship's company, Shepherd may well have owed his life to his promotion and transfer out of the battleship a month beforehand.

In the meantime Shepherd had been lent, on a temporary basis, to the destroyer *Hero*, in which he took part in the dramatically successful second Battle of Narvik in Norway in the spring of 1940. He later served as an officer in the cruiser *Gambia*, which was lent to the Royal New Zealand Navy by the British Government. His war service took him all over the world and he ended up on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief Pacific.

After the war he was one of the few advanced engineers to be preassigned from marine propulsion into the new weapon development organisations which needed professional naval engineers. After a final sea tour as a fleet engineer officer, his experiences in the missile trials ship *Girdle Ness* and as a project officer for the somewhat ineffective first generation of British anti-aircraft missiles, Sea Slug, taught him much about how a missile programme ought not to be managed. This stood him in good stead when he was selected for Polaris.

In retirement he interested himself in local affairs, becoming president of the Plymouth Albion Rugby Football Club. A keen offshore sailor, he was a member of the Royal Western and Royal Plymouth Corinthian yacht clubs. In 1940 he married Joan Major. She died in 1988; he is survived by a son.

IAN FLEMING-WILLIAMS

Ian Fleming-Williams, OBE, art historian and teacher, died on March 6 aged 84. He was born on January 14, 1914.



IAN FLEMING-WILLIAMS was a remarkable art teacher who went on to become a leading authority on the life and work of John Constable. From the early 1970s he was closely involved with the Tate Gallery. Along with its resident Constable expert, Leslie Parris, he organised and catalogued the Tate's major Constable exhibitions of 1976 and 1991. He also published further works on the Constable canon.

Born at Heybridge, Essex, Ian Fleming-Williams was the younger son of Major C. R. Fleming-Williams, who was an illustrator, war artist, lecturer in the theory of flight to the Royal Flying Corps and subsequently a pioneer caravan-builder. After a progressive education at St Christopher's, Letchworth, at Frensham Heights and Chiswick Polytechnic, Fleming-Williams studied in the Royal Academy Schools from 1930 to 1934, and then found work with the Fleet Illustrating Service.

From 1937 to 1939 he was art master at Canford School, Dorset, where William Coldstream also taught, and where Anthony Eyton was his star pupil. During the Second World War, Fleming-Williams served in the Royal Navy as a fighter direction officer, seeing action in the Atlantic, the Pacific and Mediterranean and ending up with the rank of lieutenant-commander.

After the war, in 1947, he became art master at Charterhouse, where his passion for painting and drawing inspired generations of pupils until his retirement in 1970. In the words of one of them, he created "an alternative world" in that relatively conventional environment. His assistant art masters included Howard Hodgkin and Valerie Thornton. Meanwhile, he developed an interest in 18th and early 19th-century drawing-

masters and amateurs, and contributed valuable chapters on these unjustly neglected figures to the third volume of Martin Hardie's *Watercolour Painting in Britain* (1968).

He retired early from Charterhouse to devote himself to research on Constable. He and his wife Barbara moved to Clapham before settling in Bath, near Bath, in 1976, all the time keeping on Penrynirw, their Welsh retreat.

To coincide with the first of the Tate Gallery's Constable exhibitions, in 1976, Fleming-Williams produced the first serious study of the drawings (*Constable: Landscape Watercolours & Drawings*). He had already made a large contribution to a volume of previously unpublished Constable documents and letters, issued jointly by the Tate Gallery and the Suffolk Records Society.

While preparing that show, he and Parris began to notice paintings and drawings which though like Constables were not quite right. This led to a paper in the *Burlington Magazine* in 1978 in which they demonstrated that a number of works attributed to John Constable were in fact by his son, Lionel.

The first exhibition ever devoted to Lionel followed at the Tate in 1982. Fleming-Williams and Parris pursued their detective work further in *The Discovery of Constable* (1984). Fleming-Williams's later

writings included *Constable and his Drawings* (1990), an in-depth study of 42 drawings in the collection of another great Constable enthusiast, David Thomson, who had become a close friend, and the catalogue of an exhibition of 83 drawings from the same collection shown first at Dulwich Picture Gallery in 1994 and then in New York and Toronto. For his services to art history he was appointed OBE in 1992.

Fleming-Williams's acute observational skills and his long visual memory were also employed in other areas. He maintained an almost boyish curiosity about nature and art until the end. He was an amateur botanist, at one time making a detailed study in Wales of the eyebright family, and an expert on Greek and other coins. At the time of his death he was researching the coinage of Matthew Boulton as well as continuing his work on Constable.

Fleming-Williams's mother had been a music teacher, and in early life he played the viola. His wide-ranging passion for music sometimes created dilemmas, as when Peter Gabriel (a former Charterhouse pupil) gave him tickets for a Laurie Anderson concert when he had already booked to hear Messiaen; he would happily have heard both.

His wife died in 1981, but he is survived by his son and two daughters.

PETER HUNT

Peter Hunt, computer software pioneer, died on February 25 aged 71. He was born on December 14, 1927.

PETER HUNT'S outstanding achievement was the production, from a standing start, of an astonishing portfolio of applications software packages for a new computer company, which was the product of a number of mergers of smaller British companies. The new company, ICL, was formed with the intention of creating a force strong enough to take on IBM.

As part of Tony Benn's attempt, as Minister of Technology, to forge a great British computer company, Hunt set up teams of programmers on a scale never seen before in Europe, and motivated them

to produce successful software under alarming pressures of time. His leadership and project management were recognised when ICL won a Queen's Award for Industry for technical innovation in the production of software.

Peter Michael Hunt went up to Bristol University in 1945 and took a first in mathematics. He started his career as a lecturer in mathematics at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, and then, like many of the early workers with electronic digital computers, found himself in an industry which had not yet identified itself as anything more than an esoteric branch of maths. He worked in the aerodynamics department of De Havilland Aircraft Company, and learned his programming on the earliest computers:



Edsac at Cambridge. The Pilot Ace at the National Physical Laboratory, and the Pegasus computer at Ferranti, perhaps the most innovative and technically exciting of all the

British computer companies. At Ferranti he recognised the potential of computers in a wide range of applications and the need for supporting software, and it was in the Ferranti environment that he acquired the habits of unrelenting striving for technical excellence which were later of such value to ICL.

In 1964, when Ferranti had become part of ICL, the need for new software became clear, and the company increased Hunt's budget to fund more than a thousand programmers with 11 computers. This resulted in the production of more than a hundred software products with many millions of lines of instructions. The work was exciting but very demanding, and Hunt's ability to motivate technical staff wrestling with

apparently intractable problems was remarkable. "Your problems are my problems and I want to hear about them," he would say, and each problem would be tackled with an unfailing enthusiasm which revived any jaded spirits.

By 1968 the great task was complete and Hunt had established an international reputation. He was approached by Saul Steinberg, the chairman of the largest American software house, Leasco, who offered him the job of establishing Leasco Software in Britain.

He built up this new company to be one of the earliest large British software houses, and remained there until 1980, when he was 53. Suddenly he resigned, and although he would not give his friends a reason, it was noticed that his habitual conviviality was immediately curtailed (he drank only soft drinks from then until he died) and it was assumed that he had suffered a heart attack.

In later years he undertook a number of major assignments as an expert witness in cases involving argument about computer software. He would look forward with enthusiasm to being cross-examined as an expert witness; indeed he was sometimes heard to complain that settling out of court took all the fun out of the thing.

In his busiest days, he had always ensured that no meeting of his was boring: he set the highest standards himself, and inspired in his staff a determination to meet them. His marriage to Janine ended in divorce but he is survived by their four daughters.

RED RICHARDS

Red Richards, jazz pianist, died in New York on March 12 aged 85. He was born on October 19, 1912.

WHEN Red Richards collapsed on stage on March 12 during an engagement in New York, the jazz world lost one of the last links with the school of Harlem pianists who played for rent parties in the 1920s and 1930s. Richards learned his craft from Fats Waller, James P. Johnson and Willie "The Lion" Smith. In 1929 he joined the circle of pianists who played at Depression era events where, in return for food, drink and entertainment, tickets were sold for apartment parties to raise money to pay the rent.

Richards went on to play with most of the biggest names in traditional and mainstream jazz, from Sidney Bechet and Buck Clayton to Muggsy Spanier and Wild Bill Davison. He was an accomplished accompanist to Frank Sinatra, as well as co-leader of the Saints and Sinners throughout the 1960s.

Charles Coleridge Richards was born in Brooklyn, but moved with his mother to Harlem at the age of 11. He studied classical piano for six years with Professor Weekes, an Oxford-trained musician and amateur watchmaker who fiddled with the innards of timepieces while drawing attention to his pupils' minutest errors.

In 1928 Richards attended his first rent party, where he was immediately captivated by the "stride" of playing perfected by Johnson and Waller. "You had to make the people get up and dance, or



you would never be asked back again," Richards recalled of his initiation.

His style matured significantly from the ragtime-based two-beat of the stride pianists into an urbane, hard-swinging individual voice which brought him to the attention of saxophonist Skeets Tolbert, who hired him for his Gentlemen of Swing. Richards cut 16 records with the band and worked along New York's 52nd Street in its heyday.

After visiting California with Floyd Roy's band, and military service in Florida, Richards joined the outstanding alto saxophonist Tab Smith. In the late 1940s, Richards became one of the circle of musicians associated with George Wein's Storyville Club in Boston, and worked with Bechet and Bob Wilder.

Richards made his first European tour in 1953; it was the first of many visits to Europe where he was a popular and well-loved soloist. For most of the 1950s, however, he stayed in America playing in Muggsy Spanier's small

band. He made several discs with Spanier, notably the heartfelt *Careless Love*, cut for Decca in 1954.

In the 1960s, after a period when work was in short supply for swing era players, Richards became part of the mainstream revival as one of the founders of the Saints and Sinners. The band featured the trombonist Vic Dickenson, as well as the trumpeter Herman Autrey and the saxophonist Rudy Powell, who were both former Fats Waller sidemen. The Saints and Sinners toured Europe twice and made several recordings during their ten-year life.

Subsequently, Richards was the house pianist at Eddie Condon's club, and worked in and around New York with many of the players of his generation who enjoyed playing tasteful, swinging jazz of the old school. Richards had not yet made much of a name for himself as a solo player, but his time at Condon's changed this. He began to tour and record alone, his best work being on the 1965 Sackville disc *Lullaby in Rhythm*, cut when he was 72, but with an assurance, taste and technique that belied his age.

In his last decade Richards worked regularly in New York as a soloist and with the Harlem Jazz and Blues Band. Recently he had toured Europe and recorded in bands led by the English drummer Trevor Richards. He made his last recording session in February last year, in a band called Legends of the Swing Era, which also featured Doc Cheatham and Benny Waters.

Red Richards is survived by his wife Dorothy. They had no children.

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NEWS

Hague set to soften line on EMU

William Hague is poised to abandon his policy of ruling out Britain's entry to a single currency for ten years in a desperate attempt to unite the party before next year's European elections.

Party managers are preparing a new formula that would leave the Tories strongly sceptical about monetary union but not put a time limit on Britain's exclusion. They are aware that many companies are backing Labour because of its favourable stance on the single currency. Page 1

Cot death fear for babies on long flights

Babies taken on long-haul flights may be at risk of cot death. A study published in the *British Medical Journal* found that a small proportion of babies suffer ill-effects if they breathe air with oxygen levels similar to those in long-range jet aircraft for several hours. Page 1

Hanging to go

Flogging for public schoolboys and the death penalty for treason and piracy are about to become the latest ancient punishments to be banned by Parliament. Page 1

Match with mother

Jewish mothers are to be granted their ultimate dream — a wry version of the television show *Blind Date* that will allow them to handpick their son's girlfriends. Page 1

No sterling effort

Tony Blair and Gordon Brown ruled out government intervention to bring down the value of the pound, which reached a nine-year high in the wake of the Budget. Page 2

Unstoppable pilot

The driver with the poorest record for the 70mph limit emerged as a Second World War fighter pilot who claims to have no appreciation of speed. Page 3

Scrubs warning

The Prison Service was warned last month about allegations that "a few unrestrained" officers could be abusing inmates at Wormwood Scrubs. Officers at the jail walked out in protest at abuse allegations. Page 4

Women at helm

The Royal Navy ended a 400-year-old tradition when it sent to sea two women as commanders of their warships. Page 5

Pill will be the height of passion

The first pill to combat impotence, dubbed the male equivalent of the Wonder Bra by advertising copywriters, is expected to win federal approval in the United States next week. Market analysts predict that the pill will be the most profitable drug since Prozac — if not the biggest seller ever. The only side-effect appears to be an occasional headache. Page 20

Wilderness revival

Wild beavers may return to Britain for the first time in four centuries. Pages 9, 25

Conviction quashed

A man who spent 15 years in jail for a murder he did not commit had his conviction quashed, after tests showed that he had been vulnerable to making false confessions. Page 13

Cook's signal

Robin Cook's visit to the Har Hama settlement was intended to send a signal — the strongest yet — to both Arabs and Israelis. The message was blunt: new settlements are the cause of the two-year stalemate now burying the peace process. Page 15

China looks ahead

With unusual candour, China's new Prime Minister undertook to lead a three-year drive to solve the country's economic difficulties, which have left tens of millions of people unemployed. Page 16

Clinton law block

Republicans are considering legislation to prevent further funding for lawyers to defend President Clinton against personal scandal. Pages 18, 22, 25

Echoes of Vietnam

The United States risks being sucked into a Vietnam-style quagmire after stepping up military and civilian involvement in Colombia, analysts say. Page 19



Jacqueline Allen, former secretary of Diana, Princess of Wales, and Paul Burrell, the Princess's butler, leave Heathrow yesterday to attend a ball in Hollywood. The event will contribute to the Princess's memorial fund, of which Mr Burrell is fundraising manager.

BUSINESS

Into battle: The Savoy looks likely to become the subject of a £500 million takeover war between two American real estate investment trusts. Page 29

Transport: John Prescott is expected to set out plans to attract £7 billion of private investment into London Underground over the next 15 years. Page 29

Broadcast news: John Hendricks, chairman of Discovery Communications, believes that the joint venture signed with the BBC could produce global television channels worth up to \$4 billion. Page 29

Markets: The FT-SE 100 index rose 94.3 points to close at 5997.9. Sterling trade-weighted index fell to 107.3 after a fall to \$1.6677 and to DM3.0469. Page 32



SPORT

Racing: Cool Dawn, a 25-1 outsider and a former hunter-chaser, caused an upset in the Tote Cheltenham Gold Cup, making all the running to defeat the 9-4 favourite Dorans Pride. Page 51

Cricket: England begin the final Test in Antigua expecting to beat West Indies, a state of mind that has not existed in rational heads for three decades. Page 56

Football: The finger of blame for Manchester United's exit from the European Cup should not be pointed at the manager, Alex Ferguson, and his players. Page 56

Rugby union: Paul Burrell has been recalled by Scotland after an absence of three years for the match against England, replacing the injured Matt Stewart. Page 54

TOMORROW IN THE SATURDAY TIMES

BRITFILM REBORN

Hollywood hails the second golden age of British movies

HOLY SMOKE

The night Alan Sillitoe was thrown out of a restaurant for smoking

Oh, darlings: "You can knock Hollywood's popcorn values, sneer at its excesses. But this week you have to bow to its planetary sway" — Richard Morrison looks ahead to the Oscars. Page 40

Barn storming: Glyndebourne, move over. How one man's enthusiasm — and money — has created an opera festival in a barn in a corner of the Cotswolds. Page 41

The producers: George Martin talks about the power of the pop producer; plus David Sinclair's review of new albums, including Kylie Minogue's. Page 43

Promises, promises: Will the Budget fulfil new Labour's pledges on nursery education? Page 49

Think big: Raymond Snoddy talks to the man whose big idea became the Discovery TV channel, now a \$5 billion business. Page 44

It was predictable that sooner or later strains would show in the Italian left-wing coalition. It has taken on an opposition whose leader is hampered by a gigantic conflict of interests and a formidable judicial handicap, it has cut inflation and begun the process of privatisation and liberalisation, but it cannot guarantee a long-term policy of modernisation which Italy so badly needs. *Corriere Della Sera*

Preview: The comedian Bill Bailey joins Janet Street-Porter's matron walk from *Coast to Coast* (BBC2, 8pm). Review: Paul Hoggart on the cool sensuality of Amanda Burton. Pages 50, 51

Fighting abroad

The Foreign Secretary's apparent inability to master the right tone seems certain to create future difficulties for the Prime Minister. Mr Cook has made his bed, but it is Mr Blair who must lie in it. Page 25

Unimpeachable logic

The White House will do its utmost to discredit Mrs Willey's testimony. She, not Mr Starr, may be the real threat to the President. Page 25

Eager for beaver

The British should now pave the way for the return of a native to its traditional landscape. Page 25

PETER RIDDELL

Tony Blair's failure to register a visit to Silverstone in 1996 reflected a confusion between the status of private visits and those undertaken in an official capacity. Page 10

MATTHEW PARRIS

The middle longings of the middle-aged intrigue me less than the first crush. I do mean crush, not affair, for this usually occurs before real relationships are entered upon or even planned. I mean the person we first fancied as an idea, an image, an icon — an impossible dream. Page 24

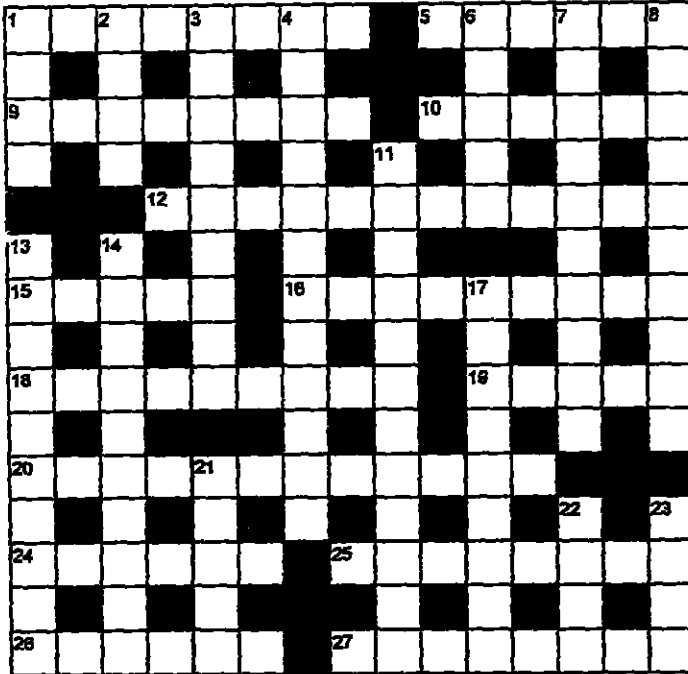
JOHN LLOYD

New Labour is redefining political leadership. It believes it is rewriting the book on democratic structures — or at least revising it substantially. The party believes this should be done in Europe. New Labour thinks European politicians have no clue about how to confect with Europeans. Page 24

Rear-Admiral Charles Shepherd, Deputy Controller Polaris, 1971-73; Ian Fleming-Williams, art historian; Peter Hunt, computer software expert; Red Richards, jazz pianist. Page 27

Robin Cook's visit to Israel: research funding; Budget tax on drivers; naval heroes; pigs' memories; millennium bug. Page 25

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,744



- ACROSS
- Foot child placed by line (5).
 - Paralleled research's beginning in the subject (6).
 - Partners forbid us to become grasping (8).
 - Grapevine produces this drink belonging to us (6).
 - Heads East fast (5).
 - Thumb knot needed to pull (5-4).
 - He may have to sort out stolen cab (9).
 - Where instruments are set out for doctors (5).
 - Occasionally, when you read the Sunday papers? (7,5).
 - Going into a stunning blow, one doctor shows how arms may be positioned (6).
- DOWN
- Small island in main channel (4).
 - Female I have made famous in books (4).
 - With cooking, men turn it into food (9).
 - Motorist may be unable to see this cuckoo (5,3,4).
 - Provoke noisy arguments (5).
 - Terms for food (10).
 - Has let crew get drunk? They need to go on the wagon, perhaps (10).
 - Become agitated and burp (3,3,4,2).
 - Instructor's equipment to get on jet first (10).
 - Landing after taking flight from here (10).
 - How to make one horse obscure and unimportant (9).
 - Shove and half-heartedly shake up (5).
 - Discover nude finally getting out of the buff (4).
 - Stable boss (4).

Solution to Puzzle No 20743

CAPRICORN PETIT
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berates weak
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Is Kylie Minogue's
new album worth
all the waiting?
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MEDIA

Will Boyle's changes
to Radio 4 work,
asks Liz Forgan
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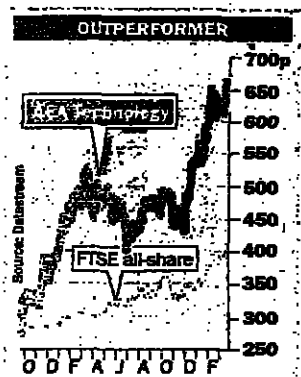
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BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

FRIDAY MARCH 20 1998

Taxpayers 'could have reaped £110m more' for AEA

BUSINESS
TODAY



THE privatisation of AEA Technology, formerly the commercial arm of the Atomic Energy Authority, could have raised another £110 million for the taxpayer but for the approach taken by the Department of Trade and Industry, according to a report by the National Audit Office.

The report, published today, finds that the DTI neglected to consider a phased sale of the business in spite of evidence that such an approach often produces a better price for complex and difficult-to-value companies such as AEA Technology. Shares in AEA Technology have soared to 662p since the company was floated at only 280p in September 1996.

Some of the biggest beneficiaries include the investment management arms of Schroders and Cazenove, respectively, the investment bank and stockbroker advisers to the privatisation. The report notes that Schroders Investment Management owned 13.35 per cent of AEA Technology in July 1997, while Cazenove Fund Management owned 4.74 per cent.

Schroders and Cazenove have largely rejected the report's findings, and believe the Government received full value for AEA Technology. The DTI received £228 million from the sale.

The company's shares jumped to 323p on their first day's trading and have risen strongly ever since. The NAO report suggests that if the DTI had retained a 40 per cent stake until last month, it could then have sold it for £200 million, or £110 million more than it received 18 months ago.

The DTI does not accept this, arguing that a retained holding would have damaged investor perception of the business, caused conflicts of interest with the Atomic Energy Authority, its biggest customer, and damaged management motivation.

FTSE 100	5997.9	(+94.3)
Yield	2.72%	
FTSE All share	2792.53	(+38.34)
NASDAQ	16679.02	(+59.34)
New York		
Dow Jones	8771.41	(+3.89)
S&P Composite	1085.87	(+0.35)
3-mth Interbank	7.5%	(7.4%)
Libor long gilt	107.2%	(106.4%)
Yen	108.4	(108.4)
Yen close	129.94	
Yen 15-day (Jun)	\$13.65	(v)
London close	\$291.85	(\$290.55)

Savoy at centre of £500m American bid battle

By DOMINIC WALSH

THE SAVOY looks set to become the subject of a £500 million takeover battle between Starwood Lodging and Meditrust, two of America's powerful real estate investment trusts (REITs).

The Times understands that the Wontner family, which has held sway over the Savoy Group since 1953 by virtue of its controversial share structure, has at last agreed a price at which it is willing to cede control, and hopes to secure a deal within weeks.

The main beneficiary of the Wontner decision will be Granada Group, which inherited a 68 per cent stake in Savoy via its takeover of Forte two years ago. Gerry Robinson, chairman of Granada, has been seeking an exit ever since, but has been frustrated by the Savoy's two-tier share structure. His stake carries just 42 per cent of the voting rights, denying him outright control.

A deal at £500 million would value Granada's Savoy stake at around £300 million. In the wake of the Exclusive Hotels sell-off, the Savoy Group and the Grosvenor House Hotel are the last two big Forte assets that Granada is seeking to offload. Meditrust is thought to have been keen to buy both, although last night negotiations broke through an impasse. "Things are at a very delicate stage," said a source.

A sale to Starwood or Meditrust would make Savoy the latest in a long line of prime hotel assets to fall into the hands of the big-spending REITs, backed by generous tax breaks and soaring share prices. Starwood recently paid \$14.6 billion for ITT, owner of the Sheraton chain, while Meditrust, already a major operator of healthcare properties in the US, unveiled a \$3 billion move into hotels with the acquisition of La Quinta Inns, based in Texas.

Both companies have targeted Europe, and Starwood, which at Christmas paid \$52 million for Scotland's Turnberry hotel and golf courses, has just posted a senior executive to London on a full-time basis. There were also suggestions that a Washington-based financier, who had a bid of £400 million rejected last year, may yet return to the fray.

The US invasion of the sector comes at a time when Asian investors are quietly putting a "For Sale" sign on top assets such as the Metropolitan and Halkin hotels.

One of the factors driving the surge of interest in Savoy is the performance of its hotels in London—Claridge's, the Connaught, the Berkeley and the Savoy itself.

Under the stewardship of Ramón Pajares, the once-moribund group is prospering, and its 1997 results due out next week should show pre-tax profits of £20 million, rising to £30 million next year.

Even at that level £500 million looks expensive but prospective purchasers are banking on the prestige of the Savoy brand. Senior Pajares, who looks certain to be kept on by new owners, has in recent weeks been visiting the Continent to view hotels where the Savoy brand could be brought to bear.

None of the parties involved would comment. But one close follower of the Savoy saga said last night: "There have been many false dawns, but we're not on amber any more. The lights are about to turn green."

Savoy A shares, which started the year at around £11.50, closed last night unchanged at £14.95. Broadly the level at which the City expects a deal to be struck. The controlling B shares could fetch at least £75.

Checking in, page 33



Tom O'Toole may soon be opening the doors of the Savoy to new owners if talks succeed

Discovery and BBC join forces

By RAYMOND SNOODY, MEDIA EDITOR

A JOINT venture between the BBC and Discovery Communications, signed yesterday after 18 months of negotiations, could create new global television channels worth up to \$4 billion (£2.4 billion).

John Hendricks, the Discovery founder and chairman, said Discovery could be available in 400 million households within ten years and co-owned with the BBC "maybe six to eight worldwide networks".

Under yesterday's agreement between Discovery and

BBC Worldwide, the commercial arm of the BBC, the corporation will get a 50 per cent equity stake in all new channels launched by Discovery outside America. The BBC will also receive 20 per cent of the Animal Planet channel.

Discovery is providing \$175 million for the BBC to make new documentaries and \$100 million to launch BBC America, a 24-hour channel for US cable and satellite systems.

Media, pages 44-47

Prescott to unveil plans for the Tube

By ARTHUR LEATHLEY, TRANSPORT CORRESPONDENT

JOHN PRESCOTT will today set out plans to attract £7 billion of private investment into London Underground over the next 15 years.

The Deputy Prime Minister is to make a long-awaited announcement in the Commons about proposals to break up the network, splitting the infrastructure from train operation.

The proposals will set out ways in which investors, likely to be led by Railtrack, will recoup their money through

access charges payable by the state-run train operation. Mr Prescott will give details of an additional £500 million investment in public transport, announced in the Budget. The money, to be spread over three years, is to be targeted primarily at the Tube network, which could receive up to £400 million.

The Underground faces a £1.2 billion investment backlog and managers say that the £7 billion is needed to bring the system up to standard.

Tempus, page 32

Shares close near 6,000 as rate rise fears recede

By ALASDAIR MURRAY, ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

THE stock market surged to a record high yesterday — ending just shy of 6,000 — as fears of an imminent interest rate rise began to evaporate.

Willem Buiter, one of the more hawkish members of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee, raised hopes that the Bank will not raise rates next month by describing the Budget as "welcome" because it will "permit us to do less than we would otherwise have had to do."

Professor Buiter, one of the four members of the committee to vote for a rate rise in February, added that the Budget had a "tightening bias" and would help the Bank to achieve a "more balanced" approach to meeting the inflation target.

The market was also cheered by monetary data pointing to a slowdown in the growth of personal borrowing. The FTSE 100 climbed 94.3 to reach its third consecutive record close, of 5,997.9. Dealers said that the economic data was pointing at worst to just one more interest rate rise, while the surge of cash into the market would keep it climbing in the next few weeks.

The pound, however, lost only a little ground from the nine-year peak it reached on Wednesday, closing down 0.2 at 107.3 on its trade weighted index. It slipped half a penny

to DM3.0469 while falling from \$1.6715 to \$1.6677.

Further evidence that the economy could be cooling emerged in money data that showed the annual growth rate of M4, the measure of broad money supply, slipping into single digits for the first time in more than a year.

M4 rose at an annual rate of 9.7 per cent, compared with 10.2 per cent in January, as the depressing effect of a large public debt repayment was tempered by a strong rise in private-sector borrowing.

Data produced by the British Bankers Association also revealed a slow down in personal borrowing. The mortgage lending component rose at an underlying rate of 15.45 million, below the recent monthly average of £675 million. Consumer credit also weakened, increasing by £492 million compared with £576 million in January.

Stock market, page 32

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PC • NOTEBOOKS • SERVERS

Jobs boost as Morrison expands southwards

By FRASER NELSON



WILLIAM MORRISON, Britain's sixth-largest supermarket group, plans to create 2,400 jobs this year by expanding out of its Yorkshire homeland and into the south of England.

The company, which has 85 supermarkets concentrated mainly in northern England, intends to open in Sheffield, Banbury and Redford this year and plans five more over the next two years. John Dowd, managing director, said the expansion plans could create a further 3,000 jobs next year, taking its total workforce to 33,400 by the millennium.

The proposals came as the company beat City expectations with a pre-tax profit that grew 11.5 per cent to £151 million in the year to February 1. The strong pound helped it to buy cheaper groceries towards the year-end, allowing operating margins to harden to 6.4 per cent.

Its 60 acre distribution site in Northwich opened in October and is expected to help to bring margins down further this year.

Underlying sales growth was 2.6 per cent over the year, after stiff competition in petrol retailing left its forecourts returning flat growth. The company said that petrol growth has recovered to 9.2 per cent in the past six weeks, taking overall group sales

growth to 3.1 per cent. Although this is lower than its Christmas peak growth, sales figures were better than the City expected. The shares jumped 6.9 per cent to 256p, their sharpest one-day rise in three years.

City analysts say that Morrisons has so far been left aside from the main takeover speculation in the retail sector because Ken Morrison, the chairman, owns 40 per cent of the company through his family holding.

One leading retail analyst said: "Ken Morrison takes a very paternalistic view to the company. He leaves us in no doubt that he will not sell willingly, and this makes him a monumental hurdle for the likes of Asda or Tesco."

However, other analysts suggested that ownership of the supermarket company will be a major issue when Mr Morrison, now 66, retires. No other family members sit on the main board, although others work further down in the company.

The company is now expected to make pre-tax profits of £167 million next year, up from previous consensus forecast of £159 million. Earnings are expected to rise to 13.4p per share. Last year, earnings were 12.5p (11p) a share. The dividend rises to 2.1p (1.7p) with a final 1.7p due May 15.

Tempus, page 32

LDV-Daewoo to create 2,000 jobs

By Adam Jones

UP TO 2,000 jobs will be created in Birmingham after the Department of Trade and Industry agreed to give £25 million to a joint venture between LDV, the UK truck maker, and Daewoo of Korea.

The two companies are to spend £160 million on the development of two new vans, which will be made in LDV's Washwood Heath plant in Birmingham and at Daewoo's factory in Lublin, Poland.

It is understood that Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, had been asked for between £30 million and £40 million originally under the Regional Selective Assistance scheme.

In deciding to offer a smaller sum, the DTI satisfied itself that the alliance would not be threatened by the financial difficulties in Korea and other Asian states.

A Daewoo spokeswoman said: "Daewoo is a global company. Lots of our interests

are outside Korea and we don't really rely on the won." It is hoped the alliance will increase production at LDV's Birmingham plant from the current level of 17,000 to 30,000. About half of these will be Daewoo-branded vans, mainly for Eastern Europe.

The other 40,000 will bear the LDV marque. LDV is aiming for sales of 20,000 a year in the UK, which accounts for the great majority of its current sales. The other 20,000 a year will be sold in continental Europe, where LDV has a very small, but growing presence.

Daewoo is investing £25 million in LDV to support the project and will take a "significant, but not controlling" stake in the company as a result. The final contract is still to be signed.

Of the £160 million to be spent, roughly a third will go on product development and the rest on transforming the factory. The new jobs will be created between 2000 and 2005 and 1,500 existing jobs will be safeguarded.

Colin Dyer, chief executive, said that some 40 per cent of garment manufacturing was now sourced from outside the UK. He said: "By the end of the century half of our garments will be made abroad."

Earnings before exceptional items were 27.3p a share (21.8p) and the total dividend is maintained at 15.3p in line with Courtaulds' policy of raising dividend cover. The shares rose 17p to 363p.

Courtaulds Textiles leaps ahead

COURTAULDS TEXTILES aims to earn record profits this year, exceeding the £47 million it earned in 1994, its best year so far.

The textile and garment maker, which is a big Marks & Spencer supplier, yesterday reported a pre-tax profit before exceptional items of £41.2 million for 1997, up from £32.1 million in the previous year.

Lace and stretch fabrics enjoyed a surge in profits thanks to restructuring in America aimed at reducing costs. But profits at Courtaulds' lingerie business declined marginally to £11.4 million.

Total sales to M&S rose by 5 per cent, on a like-for-like basis, with clothing up 7 per cent and a 20 per cent gain in outerwear.

Colin Dyer, chief executive, said that some 40 per cent of garment manufacturing was now sourced from outside the UK. He said: "By the end of the century half of our garments will be made abroad."

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Malcolm Harris said that Bovis profits were about £250,000 better than expected

Bovis builds on forecast

By Adam Jones

PROFITS at Bovis Homes, the housebuilder demerged from P&O last December, marginally exceeded their pre-flotation forecast yesterday, lifting the shares 15p to a high of 261½p. The shares were placed at 200p in December.

P&O announced the float in October, but sentiment turned against housebuilding stocks

and the eventual price was a disappointment to some.

Pre-tax profits of £37.3 million in 1997 were about £250,000 better than expected, Malcolm Harris, the Bovis chief executive, said yesterday. Profits were up 60 per cent, even though turnover fell from £268 million to £249 million.

The operating margin rose from 11 to 15.4 per cent. Bovis plans to expand in

northern England, beyond its power base in the South and the Midlands, but has no plans to start selling in Central London, where the property price rises have been highest.

The average selling price of a Bovis house rose from £90,100 to £92,600. Adjusted earnings rose 40 per cent to 22.8p a share. As stated at the demerger, there is no dividend.

Trocadero depresses Burford

By Carl Morris

THE Trocadero leisure and retail complex at Piccadilly Circus in London has dragged down the performance of Burford, the property group, which owns 25 per cent of the Trocadero company. Burford's net asset value rose 3 per cent to 133p a share in the year to December 31 despite a 7 per cent rise in the value of Burford's investment portfolio.

Burford paid £210 million for the Trocadero and the London Pavilion in July but the poor performance of Segaworld, the indoor theme park, caused the share price of Trocadero to collapse, wiping £45 million off the value of Burford's investment.

Burford yesterday reported a 64 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £24.7 million, including profits of more than £9 million from disposals. Nigel Wray, chairman of Burford, said: "The disappointing performance of Segaworld has effectively put something of a blot on the building itself."

Last year Burford paid £99 million for Mayfair Place, a West End property that will be redeveloped after securing a pre-letting. The dividend for the year is 2.3p, up 9.5 per cent.

Telewest cautious as digital launch nears

TELEWEST, Britain's second-largest cable operator, said it would tread cautiously over the introduction of more than 200 channels of digital television. In particular, where is the Premier League which could be tied in the Restrictive Practices Court for a year, said Stephen Davidson, chief executive. Mr Davidson still had major concerns about whether the digital programming would be good enough.

Meanwhile, talks go on with potential merger partners against a background of consolidation in the cable industry. A merger with General Cable would probably be Telewest's preferred option if terms can be agreed. Mr Davidson hailed 1997 as Telewest's "big breakthrough year". Revenues rose 33.2 per cent to £387 million and, after a restructuring, earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation, rose in the year to December 31 from £0.5 million to £49.6 million. As network expansion continues — it is now 80 per cent complete — the net loss rises from £251 million to £311 million.

C&W plans disposals

CABLE & WIRELESS, the telecommunications group, is in talks to sell minority stakes in telephone companies in South Africa and South America. The sales form part of the strategy of Dick Brown, chief executive, to raise £1 billion by disposing of investments in businesses not controlled by C&W. It is believed the investments to be sold include a 25 per cent stake in Mobile Telephone Networks of South Africa and a 22 per cent stake of Colombian operator Occel.

BT's consultation plea

BT, the telecommunications company, yesterday called for industry wide consultation on plans to give all premium and adult lines a new 090 prefix. Ultimately all adult lines would begin with 0900. BT is anxious to ensure that appropriate measures are implemented to provide "control, choice and confidence for customers". BT believes that consultation should be carried out by the industry watchdog, ICSTIS, a view supported by Ofel.

TAB seeks new funding

THERAPEUTIC ANTIBODIES (TAB), the American drug development company, is running out of money and must raise new funds. TAB ended 1997 with \$7 million (£4.2 million) but its cash burn is running at \$20 million a year. Glyn Edwards, vice president for business development, said the company will need another £20 million before it becomes cash generating. TAB's shares were placed at 52p two years ago, but have since slid to 21½p.

Bodycote 77% advance

BODYCOTE INTERNATIONAL, the metal processing group, said it had made a strong start to 1998 after reporting a 77 per cent rise in pre-tax profits, to £50.5 million, for 1997, aided by eight acquisitions, including H.T.T., a French company bought for £63 million. Turnover rose 61 per cent, to £206.5 million, with acquisitions contributing £53.7 million. Earnings per share rose to 43.6p, from 30.8p. A 6.5p final dividend makes 10p, up 35 per cent. The shares rose 110p to £11.57.

Cattles successful steer

SHARES in Cattles, the financial group, rose 43½p to 384½p after it revealed a 17 per cent rise in pre-tax, pre-exceptional profits to £39.6 million in the year to December 31. Earnings rose 18 per cent to 20.1p, out of which a total dividend of 9.8p for the year will be paid, up 18 per cent after payment of a final of 6.55p. The company also enjoyed an exceptional profit of £15.5 million in May 1997 from the sale of its remaining stake in Rosebys, the retailer.

Evans Halshaw ahead

SHARES in Evans Halshaw rose 18p, to 304p, after the motor dealer revealed a 37 per cent rise in pre-tax, pre-exceptional profits to £15.2 million on static sales of £870 million. The total dividend rises from 16.5p to 17p through a final up from 11p to 11.5p. Adjusted earnings per share rose from 22.3p to 31.3p. Alan Smith, chief executive, said: "The group has started the year well and is trading in line with our expectations. 1998 will see further progress."

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France F	6.56	6.57	6.58
Germany D	1.21	1.22	1.23
Italy L	1.37	1.38	1.39
Japan Yen	161.45	161.50	161.55
Spain P	166.00	166.05	166.10
Sweden S	8.46	8.47	8.48
Switzerland F	2.00	2.01	2.02
Taiwan T	20.45	20.50	20.55
UK £	1.00	1.00	1.00
USA \$	1.54	1.55	1.56
Yen Yen	161.45	161.50	161.55

Savoy Wontnerbees check in



COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

Mutterings of horror will greet the news that an American organisation is close to taking over the Savoy Group. If the apparent impasse over the Wontner family's willingness to sell has been overcome, then an auction is almost certain to develop. Apart from its US hotel rivals, the likelihood is that others who have knocked on the Savoy door before and been turned away will try again.

Luxury hotels are the trophy purchases of the 1990s. The Sultan of Brunei has the Dorchester, Mohamed Al Fayed has The Ritz in Paris and the Barclay Brothers have the Ritz. They none of them expect to grow fat on the profits, albeit they enjoy making use of the dining facilities.

The Savoy group offers a plethora of trophies. It is rumoured that Henry Kravis, the multi-millionaire financier behind the leveraged buyout house Kohlberg Kravis Roberts, has had it on his wish list for some time. Similarly Elliott Bernerd, the property magnate who runs Chelsfield, has cast longing eyes over the group. He built up a 5 per cent holding at one stage, believing that Savoy would be a complementary addition to his Wentworth golf club. Eventually, frustrated at the stalemate, 18 months ago he sold

the shares. Then he bought a brace of hotels, including London's Westbury, from Granada, pointing to the potential for putting retail space at ground level.

The very thought would make the Savoy regulars shudder.

When Ramon Pajares was recruited to run the famous hotels, his innovations caused shrieks of anguish from some quarters. But his determination to discreetly modernise the properties and streamline the staffing levels has made the group more profitable, and more desirable to outsiders. And despite their quibbles, the regular customers kept on coming: the Savoy Grill remains the real power base of London.

Because of the improved profitability, Gerry Robinson has felt in no need to rush and off-load the business.

Apart from the problems of wooing the Wontners, there has been the more prosaic issue of price. Excitement over bid prospects for Savoy has attached to the company a value which could not be justified in terms of the returns the group produces. If

the Wontners and their family trusts were reluctant sellers, they were most certainly not going to hand over their heritage cheaply.

But now it seems that the trustees have persuaded the family, and particularly the formidable Lady Wontner, to accept that there should be a sale and the price is up with the market. A deal is nigh.

Powerful case for cash in hand

Sir John Bourn, the head of the National Audit Office, has the blessing of 20/20 hindsight in coming to his conclusion that the sale of AEA Technology might have raised more money for the Government if it had been phased.

While he is muted in his comments on the roles of

Schroders and Cazenove in selling what had been part of the Atomic Energy Authority, his report does point a quivering finger of doubt in the direction of the two venerable City institutions. Unfortunately for the pair, the nail is somewhat sharpened by the fact that their fund management offshoots were enthusiastic supporters of the sale. Sir John relates that just a few months after the sale, Schroders Investment Management held 13.35 per cent of the shares and Cazenove Fund Management nearly 5 per cent.

Of course, these positions were built up far behind the Chinese walls that exist to separate fund management from advisory functions. But the fact that the two firms were so enthusiastic about an issue which, in their advisory capacity they are being accused of selling too cheaply is

the material to send eyebrows soaring in the more sceptical corners of Whitehall, even though the report makes clear that there was nothing amiss.

In truth, however, selling AEA was a tricky task. What were investors going to make of a business which constituted the former commercial activities of the Atomic Energy Authority?

The advisers, and there were many of them — government rarely stunts on paying fees to outside professionals — felt that the stock market could be less than enthusiastic about getting involved with nuclear power. The soaring share price of AEA since then is a glowing testimony to that error. But the sale raised £228 million for the Government in 1996. Would Ian Lang have preferred half then and the other half later? Only if the other half would have been greater, and while Sir

John advocates phasing, and points to examples of where it has reaped greater rewards, it is not always a winner. There will be some in Whitehall who recall the disaster of the phased BP share sale and favour cash in hand rather than hope delayed.

Auntie should play fair

James Ross, the Littlewoods chief executive, had hoped that the Budget might offer a little concession in the direction of pools operators, which have seen their business slashed by the arrival of the National Lottery. Gordon Brown did not oblige.

The disappointment may have been more bearable were it not for the fact that the Government seems determined to continue to push unfair advantages in the direction of Ross's competitors. The launch of the new Lottery scratch card, with prime time BBC programmes attached, is making Mr Ross seethe, as he does in out letters column this morning.

The BBC's growing involvement in commerce is a cloudy area. Publishers think it unfair that certain magazines should benefit from publicity on the public service channel. Unfair competition, they chant.

Yesterday we learnt the details of the Beeb's deal with Discovery, a commercial arrangement that promises to reap big rewards for Auntie. These will be channelled back into the Beeb, to the benefit of licence-payers. But the Canalot arrangement benefits a commercial company at the expense of other organisations, Littlewoods among them.

The Government's enthusiasm for the National Lottery, and what it can do with the proceeds, should not be allowed to lure the BBC away from its charter.

Exhaust pipe dream

EARLY morning radio listeners were blessed with the revelation that Kwik Fit was heading into financial services. Picking up a pension while you wait to have a wheel changed may not seem such a far fetched idea now that every business is turning itself into a bank. But Kwik Fit founder Tom Farmer is resisting the trend and sticking to the business he knows. The men in overalls will not be flogging Isas. Hooray for that.

Capital Corp blames cut dividend on Chancellor

By JASON NISSE

CAPITAL CORPORATION, which owns three central London casinos, has cut its dividend, blaming the move on the Chancellor's decision in the Budget to dramatically increase the gaming levy.

The action comes before a meeting this afternoon between a senior civil servant from Customs & Excise and both Alan Hearn, chief execu-

tive of Capital, and Alan Goodenough, his opposite number at London Clubs International (LCI).

The duty increase, which surprised the gaming companies, the Gaming Board and the Home Office, comes into effect on Monday and will cost the industry £30 million a year.

Capital estimates its share of the increase will be around £5.5 million and says that if the move is not reversed, it will pay

85 per cent of its pre-levy profits to the Government in the form of duty, corporation tax and VAT.

The cut in the final dividend, from 6p to 3p, means Capital is paying out just 5.125p for the year. Its shares fell 11½p to 114½, having fallen 15p on Wednesday.

However, there is speculation in the City — denied yesterday by Capital's chairman, Ernest Sharp — that the

company would have cut its dividend anyway because of a poor performance in the final quarter of last year.

Pre-tax profits rose from £12.3 million to £16.4 million in 1997 — but this was after a £2.7 million contribution from Cromwell Mint, the casino bought in September, and before the £4 million costs incurred successfully defending the bid from LCI. Earnings per share after exceptional rose from 6.44p to 7.86p, not enough to cover a maintained dividend.

Capital said that Crookford's, the group's main casino, was hit by the Asian financial crisis, with many Far East punters staying away. This has continued into the current year and the group's second casino, The Colony Club, is expected to be hit by a revamp of The Rendezvous, LCI's rival in a similar area of the market.

Tempos page 32

Shares soar as Kwik-Fit accelerates

By KATHY LIPARI

SHARES in Kwik-Fit Holdings rose 79p to 511p yesterday after the car tyres and exhaust group increased pre-tax profits to £55.1 million from £43.3 million in the year to February 28.

It was a good day for Sir Tom Farmer, chairman and chief executive, who made an £11 million paper profit on the value of his 7.8 per cent Kwik-Fit. He also received a £200,000 salary increase, to £1.02 million.

Kwik-Fit plans to grow its motor insurance business by 50 per cent this year, creating 400 new telemarketing jobs. Insurance, launched two years ago, contributed £7 million to profits on turnover up from £8.3 million to £32.7 million.

Earnings increased 30 per cent to 22.3p a share. A 4.15p final dividend lifts the total payout to 6.5p from 5.6p.

Amec considers Fairclough disposal to free up capital

By PAUL DURMAN

AMEC, the construction group, has said it would be prepared to sell its Fairclough Homes arm in a year or two.

Fairclough's profits more than doubled last year, to £16.2 million, but the group sees more scope to increase its margins and extend its landbank. Amec would then be willing to sell.

Peter Mason, chief executive, said: "If we could find a better use of the capital tied up

in Fairclough, we would do that." Comparisons with quoted housebuilders suggest it could be worth £150 million or more.

Amec was reporting a 26 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to £47.5 million, before a one-off gain of £20.9 million, mainly from the sale of businesses.

Heavy losses in Germany and provisions on disputed contracts in the UK left the

group's building and construction division — by far the largest, with £1.2 billion of turnover — nursing a £13.7 million loss, a reverse from a £6.2 million profit.

Amec said that this disguised a satisfactory performance from most businesses. A final dividend of 3.25p increases the total by 25 per cent to 5p a share.

Tempos, page 32

Toad pays £10m for Sextons

By FRASER NELSON

TOAD, the car security company founded by Dr Chris Evans, will double in size after buying Sextons, Britain's largest car radio specialist, for £10 million.

Colin Lewis, who founded Sextons 22 years ago, will re-

ceive £7.5 million from the deal and a £1 million shareholding in Toad. His son John, who has been in the business for ten years, is exchanging his 10 per cent stake for a £1 million shareholding in Toad.

Kevin Grey, Toad's chief executive, said that it should

carve £1 million of annual cost savings from the deal.

The enlarged Toad will have annual sales of £30 million, against £4.81 million last year. It is expected to lose £1.6 million for the year to March 31, but says it will be back in profit by the end of 1998. Toad is raising £5.6 million in a rights issue.

Tempos page 32

Johnson Fry suffers £2.2m loss

By GAVIN LUMSDEN

JOHNSON FRY, the slimmed down financial services company that issued a profits warning in November, yesterday revealed losses of £2.2 million, before tax and exceptional last year, compared with a £2.4 million

profit in 1996. Charles Fry, co-founder and former managing director, has now resigned from the board. After the sale of its housing management business the group posted a post-tax profit of £600,000.

Since issuing the warning Johnson Fry has closed its

financial products business and is reviewing its corporate finance division, both of which suffered operating losses of £1.1 million. Its core fund management business also lost £1.3 million. An unchanged final dividend of 2p will be paid holding the total at 4p for the year.



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STOCK MARKET

MICHAEL CLARK

Stock Market Writer
of the YearShares make a 94-point
leap to near 6,000 level

NEXT stop 6,000, came the cry in the City, as share prices propelled themselves to another record high. The FTSE 100 closed at its best of the day with a leap of 94.3 points to 5,979.9, just a whisker shy of its target. Turnover reached 869 million shares.

The improved outlook for investors that has emerged from this week's Budget has grabbed attention in the Square Mile. This combined with stock shortages, bid speculation, and growing hopes that another rise in interest rates can be avoided has helped fuel the gains.

This time the equity market achieved its goal without the help of the bond market, which suffered falls stretching to 5% at the longer end, unsettled by rate rises in Europe.

There was the usual flurry of bid speculation. Rascal Electronics stood out with a leap of 23p at 326½p. Sir Ernest Harrison retires this year and followers of Rascal say he is likely to go out on a high note. Talk of a bid is commonplace.

Bardays Bank touched £18.30 before rallying to reduce the loss to 10p at £18.65 after the house broker Credit Suisse First Boston downgraded its recommendation from "buy" to "hold" when the shares reached their published target level.

Henry's, the motor distributor, rose 20p to 487½p after CSFB upgraded its recommendation on the shares from "hold" to "buy". A "buy" recommendation lifted Elements, the speciality chemicals business, 10p to 143p.

Bearish comments from the Tempus column put the skids under Smiths Industries, which finished 26½p lower at 847½p. Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, the broker, has also turned seller of the stock in the wake of this week's disappointing profits news. Brokers say the latest surge in the value of the pound is also making the shares of Smiths and other engineers less attractive by the day. Sterling-related losses were also recorded in GKN, 43p to £10.30, and Weir Group, 8p to 296½p.

The Chancellor may have put a penny on a pint, but that has not deterred Goldman Sachs, which continues to take a shine to Bass, one of Britain's biggest brewers. Bass rose 28p to £11.27 after the US securities house reiterated its "buy" recommendation. Other



Model figures for Colin Dyer, the chief executive of Courtauld Textiles, helped to lift the shares 17p to 363p

ers to go better among the brewers and pub chains included Harveys & Hanson, 11½p to 241½p, Luminar, 22p to 767½p, Martson Thompson, 5½p to 311½p, and SFI Group, 9p to 197½p.

Kingfisher continued to reflect on Wednesday's bumper profits with a rise of 44p at £11.40. Brokers have been forced to upgrade their profit

estimates for the current year, while both Salomon Brothers and Henderson Crosthwaite have raised their target price for the shares to £12.

Courtauld Textiles responded to full-year results at the top end of expectations with a jump of 17p to 363p.

Peel Hotels, the new vehicle for Robert Peel, the former Thistle Hotels boss, raced to a

strong premium when trading got under way on the Alternative Investment Market. The shares which were placed by Peel Hunt, the broker, at 25p, valuing the company at £1.25 million, opened at 60½p and touched a high of 81p. They eventually closed at 78½p, a premium of 53½p.

Mr Peel, who spent 21 years at Thistle, was ousted from the chief executive's chair last November with a £700,000 payoff. He owns 60 per cent of the shares and has also been granted one million share options at between 25p and 100p.

Whitecross Group stood out with a leap of 32p to 139½p, after confirming it had received a bid approach. At these levels, the AIM-listed company is valued at £6.7 million.

Merger talks also provided a welcome boost to Kiln Capital, up 13½p at £24½p. The company is in talks with Kiln Holdings about the possibility of a merger.

RJB Mining was an early casualty dropping 18½p to yet another new low of 85p. A year ago, shares of the coal miner stood at 453p.

Further weakness in shares of Newcastle United brought out the bargain-hunters with the price closing 3½p up on the day at 97p, after touching 89½p. It follows their defeat on Wednesday, at the hands of relegation battlers Crystal Palace. The board were forced to issue an apology over comments made by two of its directors which were reported in a Sunday newspaper.

Manchester United dropped 3p to 143p, having crashed out of the European Cup. GILT EDGED: Rising interest rates in Europe and evidence of inflationary pressure in the US left bond prices sharply lower on the day.

In the futures pit, the June series of the Long Gilt dropped £12½ to £107½½ as a total of 75,000 contracts were completed. The five-year future fell 0.15 to £102½½ in thin trading. Among conventional issues Treasury 8 per cent 2021 fell £1½ to £126½½, while at the shorter end Treasury 7 per cent 2002 was off £2½ to £102½½.

NEW YORK: Wall Street stocks were narrowly mixed at midday with the Dow Jones industrial average down 3.99 points, at 8,771.41, as investors took a cautious stance ahead of today's triple witching expiry of options and futures.

WORLD INDEXES

New York (midday):
Dow Jones 8771.41 (-3.99)
S&P Composite 1085.87 (-0.35)

Tokyo:
Nikkei Average 16679.02 (+99.34)

Hong Kong:
Hang Seng 11445.04 (+323.39)

Amsterdam:
AEX Index 1101.69 (+3.74)

Sydney:
All Ordinaries 2772.8 (+3.0)

Frankfurt:
DAX 4936.32 (+16.60)

Singapore:
Straits Times 1698.75 (+53.40)

Brussels:
General 1726.40 (+45.14)

Paris:
CAC 40 3688.68 (+36.16)

Zurich:
SIX Gen 1461.60 (+0.18)

London:
FT 30 3796.7 (+33.5)
FTSE 100 5979.9 (+94.3)
FTSE 250 5464.4 (+4.5)
FTSE 350 2872.3 (+40.9)
FTSE Europe 100 2722.47 (+34.4)
FTSE All-Share 2797.23 (+38.34)
FTSE Non Financials 2754.23 (+37.65)
FTSE Financials 140.88 (+1.13)
FTSE Govt Sec 103.90 (+0.62)
Bespoke 107.3 (+0.2)
SEAG Volume 858.50
US 1.6677 (+0.0009)
German Mark 1.0469 (+0.0025)
Exchange Index 107.3 (+0.2)
Bank of England official rate (open)
LSECU 1.5399
LSECU 160.3 Feb (3.4%) Jan 1997-100
RFX 158.5 Feb (2.4%) Jan 1997-100

RECENT RISES:

Advent 2 VCT 100

BGR 249

Bus 971

Euromoney 01/03 Wtd 6

Guardian IT 442

Harford Grp 2

Monsoon 195

Oxford Asymmetry 457

Peel Hotels 78½

Pennant Ind 164½

Quadrant Health 131½

Quadrant VCT 2 90

RECENT FALLS:

Paragon n/p (180) 25

Pat n/p (5) 21

Westbury n/p (235) 21

Closing Prices Page 39

Building sans frontières

CONSTRUCTION companies often seem to like making buildings more than they like making money. Cured of this habit, there is huge potential in the sector. Look at AMEC: it is making £47.5 million from £2.8 billion of sales, and that is after a 26 per cent improvement last year. The strong shares run since January still leaves the company valued at a little more than £300 million.

AMEC certainly claims to have seen the light, and is keen to build earnings sustainably through the construction cycle. This is not immediately clear from figures that still bear the scars of adversarial contracting and a focus on volume rather than profit. Look closer, though, and the picture is improving. In the UK, work secured through "hard bids" — the source of many of the difficulties — has fallen to only a third of the total and is rapidly

being caught by less risky projects where AMEC is in partnership with its clients.

In addition, AMEC seems to have pulled off an incredible deal with its £22 million purchase of 42 per cent of Spie Batignolles last year. The French group, not much smaller than AMEC, shipped in with an initial £7.5 million, and management believes a strong recovery is underway. If AMEC takes full control — which must be likely — it will have the basis of a European colossus with reduced exposure to the UK cycle.

Fairclough Homes is also making good progress as it is fattened up for sale. Buying in the preference shares offers a useful element of gearing, and dividends are rising rapidly. Much hard work has still to be done at the group. But with the shares on a modest 11 times earnings, AMEC looks good value.

SJPC

MIKE WILSON, chief executive of St James's Place Capital, takes pleasure in pointing out that SJPC now has the same level of new premium income as Abbey Life. Sir Mark Weinberg, SJPC's chairman and the founder of both Abbey Life and Allied Dunbar, has done it again. In six years, he and Mr Wilson have built a fledgling life insurer into a billion-pound company.

Weinberg and Wilson know about selling life insurance and running direct salesforces, and at 1 Rothchild Assurance they have built the best sales team in the industry.

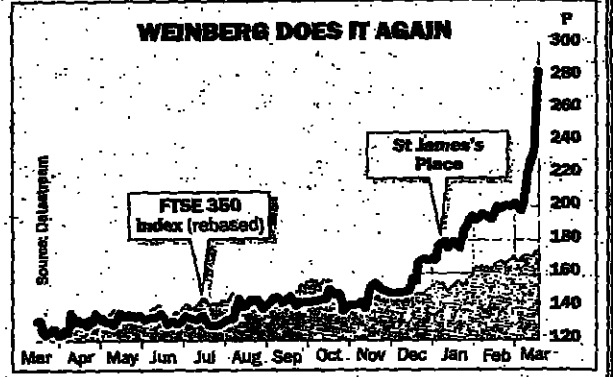
The SJ3 JRA salesmen are twice as productive as some of SJPC's rivals. Even though the rise in new business in 1997 was flattered by more difficult trading condi-

tions in previous years, analysts are looking for further growth of between 15 per cent and 20 per cent a year.

The 23 per cent-owned venture fund, Life Assurance Holding Company, is expected to make around £13 million profit this year from the purchase of GAN Life in January. LAHC will make more acquisitions as there is

further consolidation within the industry.

The only cloud for investors is that SJPC staff identify closely with Weinberg and Wilson, and would follow them out the door if they were ever to leave. But for the present, the company is still growing strongly and there are no signs that either man is looking for a new venture.



Wm Morrison

WM MORRISON has slipped from the limelight in the past six weeks, for no good reason. Shares of Kwik Save, Somerfield, Safeway and Asda have been buoyed by takeover hopes, but the City has taken one look at Ken Morrison's majority holding and discounted any hopes of his bowing to a bid.

Yesterday's results serve as a reminder of what good quality Morrison's shares represent. It has arguably the most attractive property portfolio in the sector, owing the freeholds to almost every one of its 86 stores.

Its second-half demonstrates great improvement. Its "street store format", with lots of tills for separate grocery sections, has delivered underlying growth of 3.9 per cent in the last six months of the year, compared with 1.3 per cent in the first half.

Most encouraging is the hardening of its operating

margin by 0.3 points to 6.4 points — the result of better stock control, a cease-fire on price wars and the strength of sterling helping its core grocery range.

This growth is not spectacular, but seems sustainable — and for this reason, the shares deserve a premium to the market. At 19.1 times the 13.4p of earnings Morrison should make next year, they are on par.

If the company can maintain this steady growth, while the likes of Safeway surrender profitability in a bid to remain independent, there is more upside to come.

Capital Corp

CASINO companies do not elicit much sympathy, which is why the Chancellor felt comfortable in knocking them for six. But had the decision to increase the levy was for Capital Corporation, it will not make itself any more popular by blaming the levy for the decision.

to cut its final dividend.

There is no way of knowing whether Capital would have cut its dividend anyway — and the company claims it would have made a full payout had the Treasury decided not to take another £5 million a year from its profits. The full dividend would not have been covered if it had not been cut. Earnings per share — after the exceptional costs of defending the LCI bid — were just 7.86p and the uncured dividend would have been 8.125p.

Given that the company took on £26 million of debt to buy the Cromwell Mint casino and that the Far East crisis is keeping many potential customers away from Mayfair casinos, it is doubtful that it would have been prudent to make the full payout. The question is, if Gordon Brown relaxes and drops the extra level, will Capital restore the dividend?

EDITED BY PAUL DURMAN

COMMODITIES

LIFE				ICE-LOR (London 0.00pm) CRUDE OILS (c/b barrel US\$)				GNI LONDON GRAIN FUTURES LIFE WHEAT (c/bw 1200) LIVE (c/bw 1200)			
COCA				Brent (5 day) Mar/88				Mar			
Mar	100.00	Mar	119.15	12.50 -0.05				74.00			
Apr	100.00	Apr	119.15	13.10 -0.35				74.00			
May	100.00	May	119.15	13.65 -0.35				74.00			
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ANATOLE KALETSKY

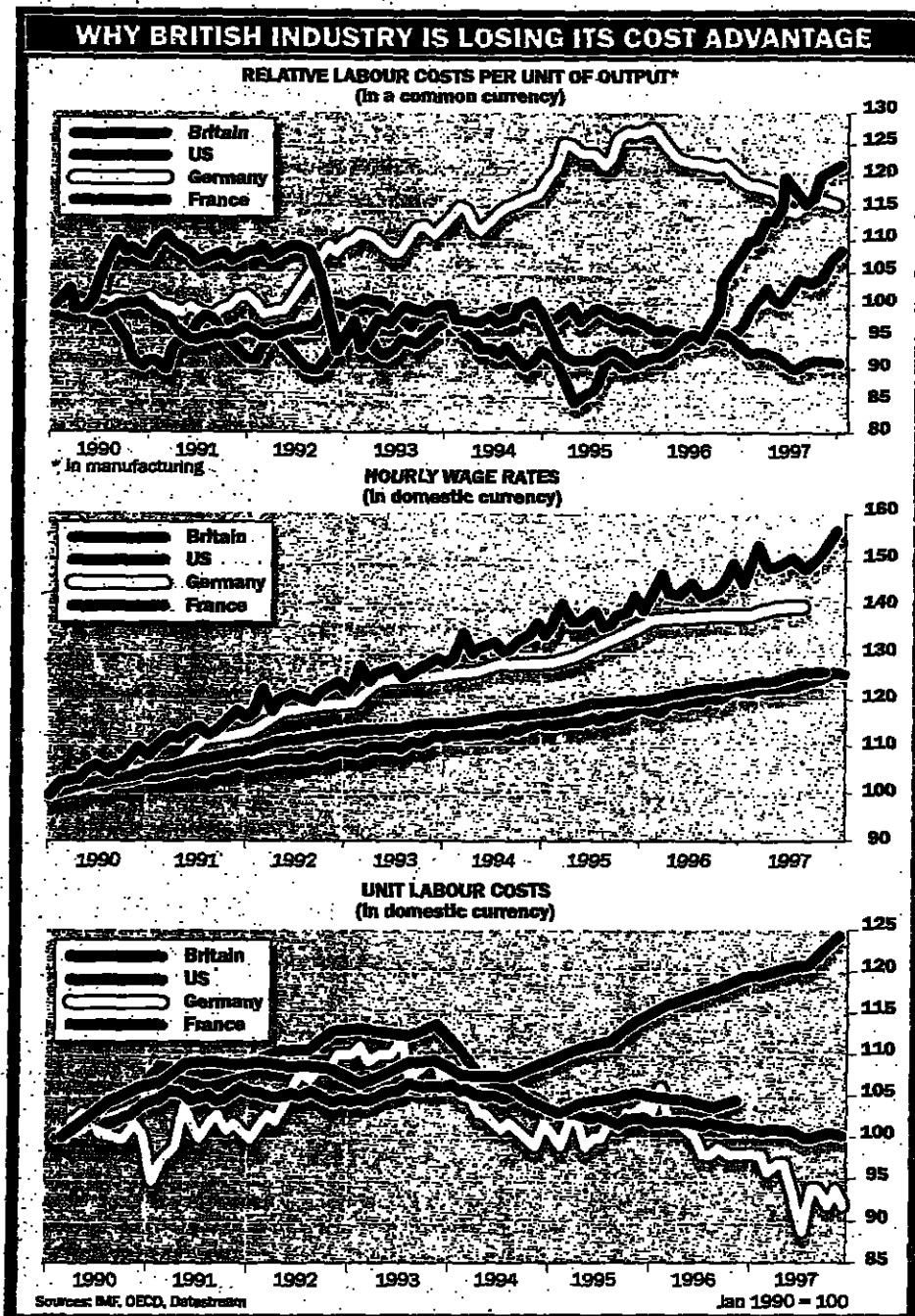
Strong pound carries the can for weak management

A whisper of mea culpa should be heard from captains of industry

Regular readers of this column may be getting fed up with articles about the strong pound. To be honest, I am myself getting a little bored with the subject. Having had two nights to sleep on Gordon Brown's Budget, there are plenty of other subjects I could write about. For example, I could analyse in greater detail the massive scale of the income redistribution quietly achieved by the Chancellor's national insurance reforms; or I could praise the determination and intelligence shown by Martin Taylor of Barclays Bank in cutting through the Gordian knot of national insurance and achieving in a few months what Tory Chancellors were unable to manage in 20 years — overcoming the civil service obscurantism that had thwarted all rational efforts to integrate the tax and national insurance system.

On the negative side, I could discuss at length the folly of demanding a ten-year holding period for reductions in capital gains tax (CGT). Does Mr. Brown really think that a serious investor would waste ten years holding onto an underperforming or excessively risky asset, just to secure a minor tax break? A holding period of 2 or 3 years might have inspired genuine changes in financial behaviour by offering greater rewards to committed investors than speculators. The ten-year time horizon imposed by Mr. Brown, by contrast, will simply make the whole reform irrelevant to serious investors. The ten-year waiting period will be of interest mainly to accountants, who are doubtless already devising ingenious mechanisms to abuse the new rules. One almost suspects that this ludicrously restrictive definition of a "long-term investment" was deliberately devised by Mr. Brown's enemies in the Inland Revenue to bring his pet idea of "long-termism" into disrepute. In the same critical vein.

But tempting as it is to dissect Mr. Brown's detailed measures, these are not the issues that are firing up businessmen and investors in the real world. The City and the business community have focused on a completely different aspect of the Budget — its failure to restrain consumer spending and thereby to relieve the upward pressure on interest rates and the pound. There was nothing surprising about Mr. Brown's decision to eschew demand management: a passive fiscal policy and benign neglect of sterling were the predictable consequences of the decision to give independence



to the Bank of England. People who cheered the separation of monetary and fiscal policy a year ago have no right to feel surprised at the consequence now. But just because the strong pound was predictable does not make it tolerable. The key question in British economic policy today is therefore simply this: is British business really suffering as badly as it claims from the strong pound?

To my surprise, I have recently detected a growing scepticism in the Treasury about the industrialists' complaints. Maybe, officials realise, this is just another case of British industrialists whingeing for another government panacea, instead of learning to live with a strong currency by cutting costs and raising productivity, as German, Japanese, American and French manufacturers have done in the past. To my even greater surprise, I am beginning to sympathise with the Treasury's frustration.

Since starting to argue 18 months ago that the pound was heading skywards, this column has repeatedly examined the question of British industry's vulnerability to the strong pound. The recent conclusion has been that industry can probably cope better than most

economists, myself included, expected a year or two ago. There have been three main arguments for this view. First, the balance of payments has remained healthy, despite the rapid rise of the pound. Secondly, the pound was very undervalued two years ago: much of the rise since then has been a bounce, simply bringing it back into a historically familiar range. Thirdly, Britain's absolute labour costs have remained lower than costs in Germany, France, America and other countries, even when the pound stood at DM3.

The main contrary argument is that the trends in relative costs matter more than absolute levels. Britain's costs may still be relatively low, but they are escalating very rapidly. Even if British industry has not yet lost enough competitiveness to trigger a balance of payments crisis, such a crisis will be inevitable if current trends persist. This is the nub of the argument of the many industrialists who demand that sterling be urgently devalued to DM2.70 or even lower, perhaps by following Greece into the ERM. Why, then, are officials and ministers now becoming

more robust towards the industrial lobbyists' persistent devaluation demands?

Mr. Brown hinted at the answer in his exhortations against irresponsible pay increases and disappointing productivity growth in the Budget speech. Look at the charts. The top chart shows the picture usually emphasised by the business lobbies. Taking as a starting point January 1990, Britain became 10 per cent less competitive during the ERM period, but then enjoyed a 20 per cent fall in relative costs after the 1992 devaluation. All this advantage was lost in 1996 and British unit costs are now 20 per cent higher than in 1990. In the whole period, Britain, along with Germany, has suffered a 20 per cent loss of competitiveness. The obvious cure could be to devalue the pound again, as in 1992.

The next two charts, however, tell a story about how Britain's cost advantage was lost, one which businessmen are less eager to publicise. The middle chart shows the growth of hourly wages paid to manufacturing workers. It shows that pay increases in Britain have consistently been higher than in the other countries — and that the gap in wage

inflation has actually increased during the period since late 1995, when British industry was supposedly exposed to the fiercest competitive pressures. But higher wages are not, in themselves, harmful. Wage increases matched by productivity growth do not damage a company's ability to compete in world markets.

Now look at the bottom chart. This shows the combined effects of rising wages and productivity growth. In Germany, where workers enjoyed a rate of wage growth second only to Britain's, unit labour costs have actually fallen: companies have squeezed more than enough productivity out of each working hour to pay higher wages and still lower their costs. In America and France, wages have roughly matched productivity growth and unit costs have remained almost unchanged. In Britain, however, unit costs have soared: wage increases have not been remotely matched by productivity gains. To make matters worse, the period of worst performance has been the past two years. Just as the pound began to rise by 25 per cent, manufacturers piled onto themselves redoubled agony by allowing their sterling unit costs to rise by another 25 per cent. Compare this with what happened in Germany during the period from 1993 to 1995, when the mark appreciated almost as sharply as sterling has in the past two years. German manufacturers reacted by cutting their unit costs by 10 per cent — and then continued their efficiency drive, with a further 10 per cent between 1996 and 1997.

The latest earnings figures, released this week, suggested that the mismanagement of costs in British manufacturing companies has gone from bad to worse. In the 12 months to January, manufacturing wages rose 4.5 per cent, but productivity fell. The result was a shocking 4.6 per cent rise in UK domestic unit labour costs, at a time when unit costs are steady or falling in every major competitor country.

The upshot of all these figures is that British manufacturers have largely themselves to blame for the difficulties they now face in world markets. Two years ago they enjoyed an enormous cost advantage, produced by the 1992 devaluation, which they then started to fritter away. Since 1996 British industry has suffered from extraordinary failure to maintain productivity growth and control costs. This managerial failure has done at least as much damage to Britain's competitiveness as the strength of sterling. And if British managers were so flaccid when challenged by the rising pound, would they suddenly become tougher and more efficient if the pound weakened and foreign competitive pressure receded? Until industrialists can come up with a convincing answer, they may not get much sympathy from the Chancellor for complaints about the strong pound.



Ramon Pajares, in a new suite at Claridge's, is credited with reviving the group

New owner poised to check in at The Savoy as the Wontners yield

Jason Nissé reports on the latest twist in the battle to control the hotels group

Gerry Robinson hardly needs more praise heaped upon him. But in the next few weeks the much-feted chairman of Granada and incoming chairman of the Arts Council, is poised to succeed where Sir Charles Clore, of Sears, Sir Maxwell Joseph, of Grand Metropolitan, Lord Matthews, of Trafalgar House, Lord Samuel, of Land Securities, and — most famously — Lord Forte have failed. He will persuade the Wontner family to relinquish control of The Savoy.

The Granada boss has had many factors in his favour. Unlike the other tycoons, he had no ambitions to control the famous hotels group which includes Claridge's and The Connaught, both in Mayfair. Lady Wontner — whose husband, Sir Hugh, died five years ago after a 54-year career at The Savoy — is at last of a mood to set her terms to sell, having forgiven the group for ejecting her from the family's grace-and-favour apartments at Claridge's four years ago — apartments which are now rented out for more than £5,000 a week.

But most crucially of all, those around Lady Wontner are encouraging her to meet commercial reality face to face. Ramon Pajares, the Spanish hotelier who has revitalised The Savoy's fortunes, wants money to expand the chain abroad. Alan Fort, the new finance director, and ING Barings, the group's merchant bank, want a resolution of the issue while the London hotels market is at its peak. And Lord Thurso, the charismatic head of Champneys, the health resort chain and chairman of the Wontner Trust, has been an energetic go-between and harbingers of change. Against this background Lady Wontner has been persuaded to state her terms for a sale of the family's controlling interest in The Savoy.

Now it is up to Meditrust or Starwood Lodging — the American real estate invest-

ment trusts — to try to fulfil them. A stream of potential buyers has been beating a path to The Savoy's elegant art deco entrance in the Strand since Granada won control of Forte two years ago after a bitter £3.9 billion bid battle.

Mr Robinson and Co inherited a 68 per cent stake in The Savoy — but critically this majority was in the A class shares. The Forte holding, assumed by Granada, included only 42 per cent of the B class of shares, the class created in the wake of the bid for the hotel by Land Securities in 1953 and controlled by the Wontners, which carry 20 times the votes of the A class. These B shares had formed the backbone of the Wontners' spirited defence of The Savoy's independence, stretching over two decades.

Lord Forte, the Italian-born founder of the eponymous hotels group and its life president until the Granada

bid, dreamed of controlling The Savoy ever since he proposed to his wife over dinner at the hotel in the early-1930s. Having built up his company from a milk bar in Regent Street to the UK's most powerful hotels and restaurants chain, he decided to bid for the group in 1981. His offer — just £67 million compared with the £500 million price that Meditrust is expected to pay — came closer to success than any of the other previous bids, largely because The Savoy was struggling commercially at the time. Sir Hugh Wontner was dismissive of Lord Forte — damning him with faint praise. "I've known little Forte since he ran his milk bar," he smirked.

Ultimately Lord Forte was thwarted by the share structure and eight years of trench warfare followed. In the midst of this there blew up a particularly flavourous post in 1985 when the Savoy took a full-page advertisement in The Times to accuse Lord Forte of double-dealing in his stalking of The Savoy. "Ironically, while Lord Forte is doing his best to denigrate these famous hotels... he is nevertheless trying very hard to get control of them," the advert sneered.

In 1989 a peace deal was struck between Sir Hugh and Sir Rocco, Lord Forte's son, who had taken over the reigns of the family firm. Sir Rocco joined the board and was able to nominate one more director to the board. Faced with an uninspiring performance by The Savoy in the 1980s, Sir Rocco was able to increase his influence in 1994, ousting Giles Shepard as managing director and bringing in Mr Pajares from the Four Seasons Hotel.

Next week Mr Pajares will unveil what are expected to be a string of results for The Savoy, proving that the group can thrive in a competitive commercial environment. After 45 years as a protected species, its seems the famous old company is ready to live or die on its own terms.



Thurso: energetic go-between

BUSINESS LETTERS

BBC on slippery slope with Lottery

From Mr Alan Langleben
Sir, I act as solicitor to Dame Shirley Porter.
I refer to the interview given by John Magill, the Westminster City Council Auditor, to Jon Ashworth, which you featured as an article on March 18.

David Weeks has already been granted leave to appeal from his decision and an application by Dame Shirley for leave is currently being considered by the Court of Appeal.

One of the complaints made by the former councillors is that Mr Magill did not act fairly, bearing in mind the judicial nature of his functions.

If any further evidence is needed of this allegation other than the media conference he gave, which was strongly condemned by the Divisional Court, your article provides it.

Who has ever heard a judge giving such an interview in a case in which he was involved, let alone when he knows it is under appeal?

Yours sincerely,
ALAN LANGLEBEN,
Nicholson Graham & Jones,
110 Cannon Street,
London EC1N 6AR.

Auditor's interview condemned

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Missing out

A MONTH ago I brought you the heart-warming story of the ING Barings Latin American desk, dismissed by the Dutch owners. Barings then had to go out and rehire some of them because the operation was unviable with the few people left. The instigator of the purge, Peter Geraghty, head of markets, himself went a fortnight later, peeved at the arrival of some bright sparks from McKinsey.

It seems the rehires have not gone well. Those dismissed, seeing an opportunity to make their former employer grovel, have been holding out

for some pretty hefty packages — and don't ask for that payoff back either, cloggie. As Latin America, based in London, was the only bit of the shrunken emerging markets operation even marginally viable, this puts a question mark over the rest. ING thinks it can recreate the business around Furman Selz, the American bank bought last year, but clients think otherwise. More on April 2, when ING reports results.

● **GODDAMNED** pink liberal con-sump faggots. That was how the late John Wayne used to describe his political opponents, as I recall. Equally plain speaking from the majority leader of the US Senate about Michel Camdessus, managing director of the International Monetary Fund. "I would like us to get rid of the head of the IMF. He's a socialist from France. Am I too blunt?" said Trent Lott. As he had been addressing a meeting of ranchers, probably not.

One way bet

WHILE the Budget was low on surprises, there was at least



one shock. The rise in gaming duties will wipe £12 million off the profits of London Clubs, the most obvious loser. The gaming world has been struggling to understand why the Government decided on a measure that so obviously targets one company.

Well, look no further than the detailed Monopolies and Mergers Commission report into the London Clubs failed bid for Capital Corporation last year. Customs and Excise is said to have been greatly impressed by the report's breakdown of how much profit casinos make, probably the first time that there had been exposure to the public gaze. At the MMC's recommendation, the bid was blocked. Now they want the money too.

Lobby fodder

BILL GATES is at work on a second book, a more technical

Nodding off

OVER at Capital Corporation, Edwina Coven is retiring from the board, severing the final link with TV-am, where she was chairman before Capital reversed into the company. Though there will be sadness at her departure, there may be some relief. The 71-year-old had a habit of falling asleep during board meetings. I am told. And then waking up and requiring a replay, which meant those meetings sometimes went on a bit.

● **NEWS** of Jacques Attali, the Frenchman thrown out of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development for being too free with other people's money. Attali has made his debut as star columnist for L'Express, the political magazine. His first rant is all about how the French regions have too much power and everyone should be subservient to the European, sorry French, superstate. L'Express was once owned by Sir James Goldsmith. Who, we can safely say, would not have given Attali such prominence.

Lobby fodder

BILL GATES is at work on a second book, a more technical

work aimed at experts rather than the rest of us. One wonders why the creator of the Internet is so reliant on the off-spring of Caxton and Gutenberg to disseminate his ideas. Whatever. Newly disclosed figures show that Microsoft, his company, spent \$1.2 million lobbying Congress and politicians in the second half of last year alone, nearly double the bill in the first half. Microsoft has also laid out \$183,000 towards politicians' election expenses, split evenly between both parties, so political bias anyway. Yet it faces a Justice Department suit and a possible anti-trust action. In America, political influence does not come cheap.

MARTIN WALLER



Back to basics for Bill Gates and the written word



If it's any consolation I'm down as well

National Express hit by LCR

By FRASER NELSON

NATIONAL EXPRESS, Britain's largest train operator, has taken a £10.8 million charge for its part in London & Continental Railway's disastrous attempt to build a high-speed rail link for Eurostar.

The company, which with Virgin Rail was part of the LCR consortium that runs Eurostar services, posted its first profits downturn as a result of the provision.

Colin Child, finance director, said the company intends to keep its hand in with the Eurostar passenger service through a joint bid with British Airways. But he ruled out the prospect of National Express rescuing the whole project. He said: "The progress made with our five train companies has given us a good name in terms of train operators, but we're not getting involved in building infrastructure."

The LCR charge dampened a solid underlying performance, where operating profits advanced 26 per cent to £83.6 million. But after a £17.5 million cost for bedding down the three franchises it won last year, pre-tax profits fell to £54.8 million (£60.1 million). Sales from its coach operations grew 36 per cent to £237 million.

The underlying results came in at the top end of City expectations and National Express shares, which have been

moving up since the Budget, added a further 19½p to 84½p.

Its ScotRail Highland line became the most punctual rail service in Britain over 1997, with 96.7 per cent of its services running on time.

Through its five rail franchises, National Express is now the most heavily subsidised company in Britain and its franchises received £300 million in subsidy over 1997. The total subsidy will drop to £262 million this year and £43 million by 2005.

Keith Cochran, finance director of Stagecoach, made a profit of £394,000 after cashing in all the share options left open to him — more than twice his salary last year.

From October, he will be able to cash in options now worth £390,000. His cash windfall was trumped by Barry Hinkley, also a Stagecoach director, who sold £455,000 of shares — a quarter of his total holding. Stagecoach shares advanced a further 37p to 953½p yesterday. Had the two men waited until this morning to sell, they would have been £44,100 better off.

GB Railways, which runs the Anglia franchise, has ordered eight new trains from Stagecoach's Porterbrook leasing division. Porterbrook will pay £26 million for the trains, then rent them to Anglia.



Full speed ahead: Jonathan Palmer, left, with Andreas Uglund, chairman of Uglund, which saw profits of £13.3 million

Uglund steers growth course

UGLAND, the transport group that specialises in shipping vehicles, raised pre-tax profits from £3 million to £13.3 million in the year to December 31. Earnings rose to 9.81p (5.96p) and the total dividend is 4.95p (4.72p) after a 2.95p final.

Jonathan Palmer, chief executive, said that key growth areas lay in processing on shore for large American manufacturers and in second-hand car exports to Latin America, the Middle East and Africa.

Cobham awaits contract decision

By ADAM JONES

SHARES in Cobham, the engineering group, surged from 931½p to 978½p on strong 1997 trading. The group should know next month whether it has won two large military and civil aircraft contracts.

Gordon Page, chief executive, said he may know in early April whether the Ministry of Defence will choose its Firefly aircraft to replace the Bulldog

trainer. Winning the contract, likely to be worth about £120 million to Cobham and its joint venture partner, could secure the future of the group's Slingsby Aviation subsidiary.

The group may also discover in April whether it has been chosen to supply the fuel systems to the Airbus A340 500-600 aircraft.

Mr Page was announcing a 20 per cent rise in pre-tax

profits to £52.3 million. Mr Page said the order book is at a record £671 million, although the Asian economic turmoil has caused Cobham to scale down an electronic warfare training joint venture in Malaysia. He said demand for civil aircraft has not been hit.

A final dividend of 9.2p makes 13.25p (11.3p) for the year. Earnings per share rose 17.5 per cent to 38.3p.

Chilled foods help Geest boost profits

GEEST, the food producer, raised pre-tax, pre-exceptional profits from £17.3 million to £24.4 million in the year to January 3. Geest, which is still best remembered for the banana business it sold two years ago, attributed its improved performance on the strong figures included in the chilled foods market. Last year's figures included an exceptional profit of £18 million on disposals, leaving the company with net cash of £6.2 million at the end of its current year.

Earnings grew from 16.2p to 24.8p before exceptional items taken into account. The final dividend rises from 4.7p to 6.0p giving a total of 10.0p for the year, up from 8.4p. Ian Menzies-Cow, chairman, said: "The first quarter of 1998 is showing continued strong growth in demand. Ours are young markets that are growing fast. We have invested soundly and expect to exploit future market opportunities." The shares rose from 439p to 470p.

Travis perks up

TRAVIS PERKINS, the builders merchant, said the mild winter helped to lift like-for-like sales 10 per cent in the first two months of the current year, offsetting the downward pressure on cost prices caused by the strength of the pound. The company yesterday reported a rise in 1997 pre-tax profits to £49.68 million from £39.76 million on turnover of £555.83 million (£518.49 million). Earnings per share rose to 33.8p (25.8p). The total dividend is lifted to 11p (10p), with a 7.7p final.

Nike suffers Asian woes

NIKE suffered a 69 per cent fall in third-quarter earnings because of economic woes in the Asia-Pacific region and over-supply in America. The athletic shoes and clothing company earned \$72.1 million (£43 million), or 25 cents a diluted share, in its third quarter to February 28, down from \$237 million, or 80 cents a share, a year earlier. The group is to cut 1,600 jobs, or 7 per cent of its worldwide workforce, and take a restructuring charge of \$125 million to \$175 million in the fourth quarter.

Servisair steady at £7m

SERVISAIR, the airline services company, ended 1997 with net cash of £12.9 million, up from £8.2 million at the end of the previous year. Annual pre-tax profits were almost unchanged at £7 million, compared with £7.1 million previously, while earnings per share slipped to 12.4p from 12.7p. The total dividend rises to 5.3p a share from 5.1p, with a 3.55p final. The shares added 4½p to 231p yesterday but remain significantly below their 12-month high of 472p.

HR Owen accelerates

HR OWEN, the vehicle distributor, raised pre-tax profits by 65 per cent to £4.1 million on sales up 7 per cent to £378 million in the year to December 31. Earnings rose 45 per cent to 1.85p, out of which the total dividends rise 21 per cent to 0.8p after payment of a 0.4p final. Gearing fell from 70 per cent to 50 per cent. The company says it has benefited from the decision to concentrate on fewer core brands having disposed of its Citygate Peugeot and Citygate Nissan dealerships.

Hardy's net income rises

HARDY OIL & GAS raised net income from £5.7 million in the nine months to December 31, 1996, to £5.9 million for the year to December 31, 1997. Earnings slipped from 5p to 4.8p, but the total dividend for the year remains unchanged at 1p. Hardy says production is set to rise to 25,000 barrels a day in three years and is capable of 50,000 by the year 2003. During 1997 the daily average was 11,400, down from 13,100. Hardy shares rose 5½p on the announcement to 266p.

Oil explorer confident

SHARES in British Borneo rose from 339p to 343½p after the oil explorer reported a fall in net income from £14.4 million to £4 million for the year to December 31. Reserves rose 43 per cent and the total dividend is unchanged at 2.75p, after a final of 1.75p. Earnings fell from 7.62p to 6.09p. Alan Gaynor, chief executive, said that 1998 would see the first oil from Marath production in September and that two exploration and appraisal wells would be drilled on the Atlantic Margin acreage.

Clydeport lifts dividend

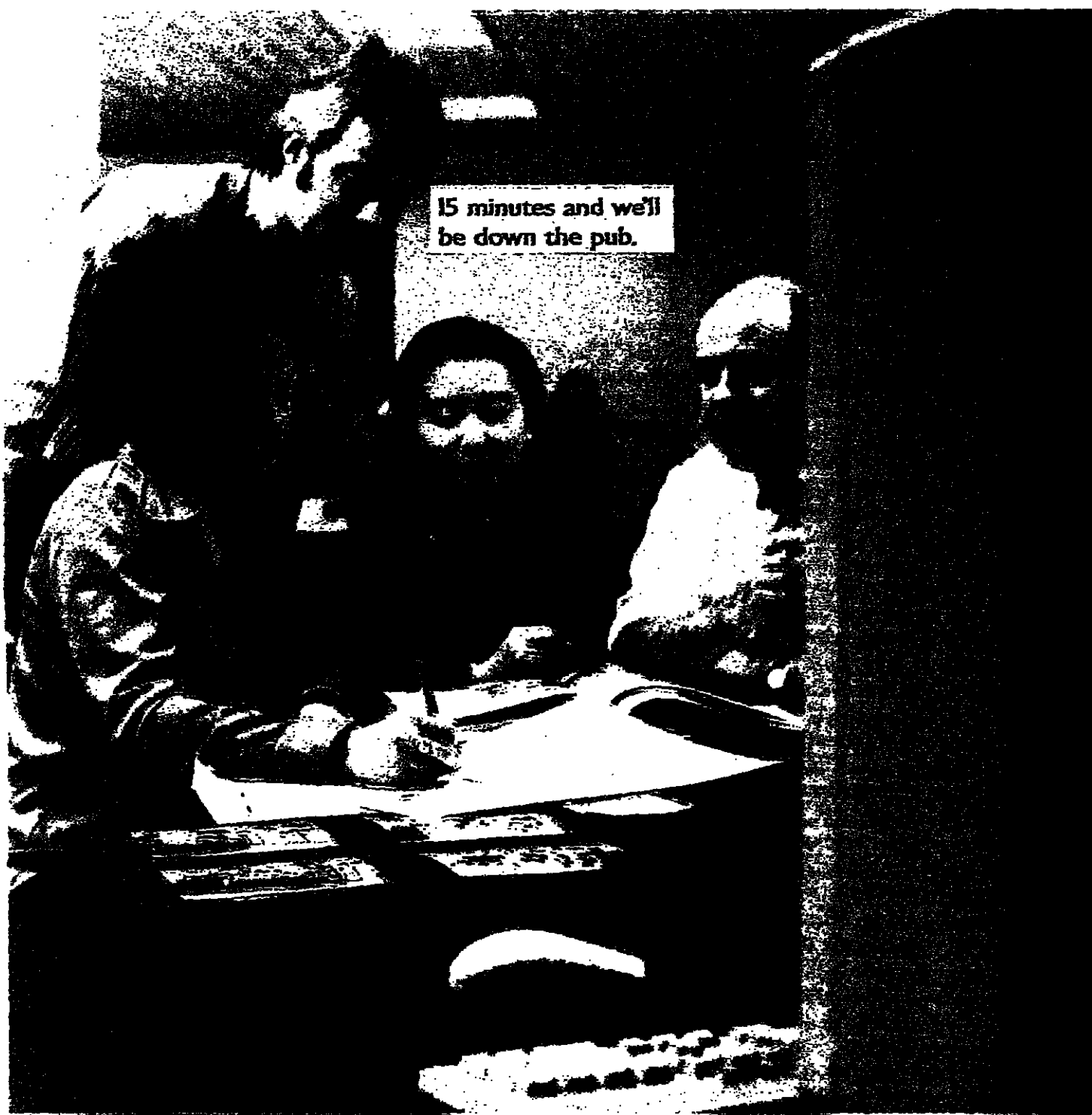
CLYDEPORT, operator of the ports of Hunterston, Glasgow and Greenock, lifted pre-tax profits to £7.85 million from £5.6 million last year. Earnings rose to 18.95p a share from 13.59p. A 3.8p final dividend lifts the total 15.1 per cent to 5.52p. Turnover improved to £20.61 million from £17.44 million. The company said the performance of the port of Glasgow continued to give cause for concern owing to a continuing lack of maize imports and the loss of steel tube imports.

Charles Baynes ahead

CHARLES BAYNES, the engineer, raised pre-tax profits by 8 per cent to £24.2 million in the year to December 31, on sales up 9 per cent to £273 million. Earnings rose 4 per cent to 7.48p, out of which a total dividend of 3.2p, up 10 per cent, is to be paid. A final dividend of 2.05p has been declared. Bruce McInnes, the chairman, said: "In the longer term the leading market positions for our businesses give me confidence for substantial, superior relative performance."

Ilion edges up to £6.1m

ILION, the computer network group, lifted pre-tax profit from £5 million to £6.1 million in the year to December 31 on sales of £203 million (£147 million). Earnings fell to 15.5p (19.5p), but the total dividend rises to 6p (5.7p) after a maintained 4p final. Wayne Channon, chairman, said: "Trading in the first two months of 1998 has been mixed. Our French company has made an excellent start to the year but our other markets have been slower." He had "reasonable confidence" over prospects.



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MDIS on the mend with results back in the black

By MARTIN BARROW

MDIS GROUP, the information technology company being nursed back to health by company doctor Ian Hay Davison, reported a return to modest profitability yesterday, but has again passed payment of a dividend.

The company reported 1997 pre-tax profits of £200,000, compared with losses of £494,000 when it took net exceptional charges of £20.26 million against a wide-ranging restructuring. Last year the company raised £24.4 million via a share placing to secure its survival and received a further

£17.4 million through an investment from Fujitsu, of Japan, which is a partner in the Glavia enterprise resource planning business.

Losses from continuing operations were reduced to £1.6 million from £23.6 million previously. The improvement was driven by a significant increase in profits from the public sector, to £7.5 million from £4.7 million, after the merger of the company's health police, local government and central government operations. Operating profits

increased to £2.4 million from £1.3 million.

Losses from human resources systems eased to £4.1 million (£17.5 million), with the deficit curtailed to £1.1 million in the second half after a number of projects were completed. Glavia trimmed losses to £3.6 million (£6.1 million), with a second-half loss of just £200,000.

MDIS shares were unchanged at 60p yesterday, valuing the business at £120 million. The shares peaked at 239p soon after the company's flotation in 1994.

ENERGY FOR INDUSTRY

FOCUS

Craig Seton introduces a three-page report on energy and reports on businesses still awaiting proper competition

Cheap electricity faces a delay

Almost two million of Britain's smaller businesses are still waiting for the freedom to choose their electricity supplier, something that nearly 60,000 larger industrial and commercial enterprises have enjoyed for several years.

These smaller businesses are the companies and organisations that spend less than £12,500 a year on their electricity supplies. Together with more than 20 million domestic consumers, their segment of the energy market was scheduled to be opened to full competition in phases from next month. However, they are angered by the decision of Stephen



Peter Rost calling for even greater savings

'Deregulated electricity will be a year behind the gas market'

Littichild, the Director-General of Offer, the industry regulator, to postpone it until September, delaying their opportunity to buy cheaper electricity.

They have been waiting a long time for the cost benefits they were promised would follow the privatisation of the energy industry. About 5,000 of the largest industrial concerns using more than 1 megawatt of electricity a year have had the freedom to choose a supplier since 1990.

Another 52,000 industrial and commercial sites using more than 100 kilowatt of electricity a year have had the same choice since 1994.

Because of the phasing arrangements for introducing competition in the huge domestic and small business part of the market — those using under 100kW a year — full deregulation will not be complete until June 1999.

Liberalisation is due to be introduced in three stages before it will apply to all the markets covered by the 14 British regional electricity companies (RECs).

Deregulated electricity will be a year behind the gas supply market, which is on course to be fully competitive by May.

Opening both markets to competition has brought about huge changes in the energy industry. The RECs are already supplying gas to

customers, taking substantial business away from Centrica, the demerged arm of British Gas, which in response is entering the electricity supply market.

Offer has put the delay in electricity down to the lack of progress by power companies in setting up and testing the complex information-technology systems that are essential for competitive trading.

The Utility Buyers' Forum (UBF), a consumer group representing manufacturers, retailers, financial firms and public-sector bodies, believes the intense competition being mounted by energy firms for customers' business will eventually deliver lower electricity prices. It estimates that one in ten of the two million small businesses in the sub-100kW market are likely to give their business to a new supplier from among the competing energy companies when deregulation is completed.

But Peter Rost, its chairman, says even greater savings could be achieved by consumers if further restructuring is carried out in other parts of the electricity industry.

The forum is calling for changes in the electricity "pool", the wholesale market that facilitates trading between generators and suppliers.

"We want an independently run pool with consumers having a say in how it is operated, and not one run by the generators and providers," he says. Last year the Government announced a review that could lead to an overhaul of the operation of the pool.

Mr Rost also believes that the generation market needs further reorganisation. The enforced sell-off by PowerGen and National Power of some of their generation capacity to the Eastern Group, which owns Eastern Electricity, had not gone far enough.

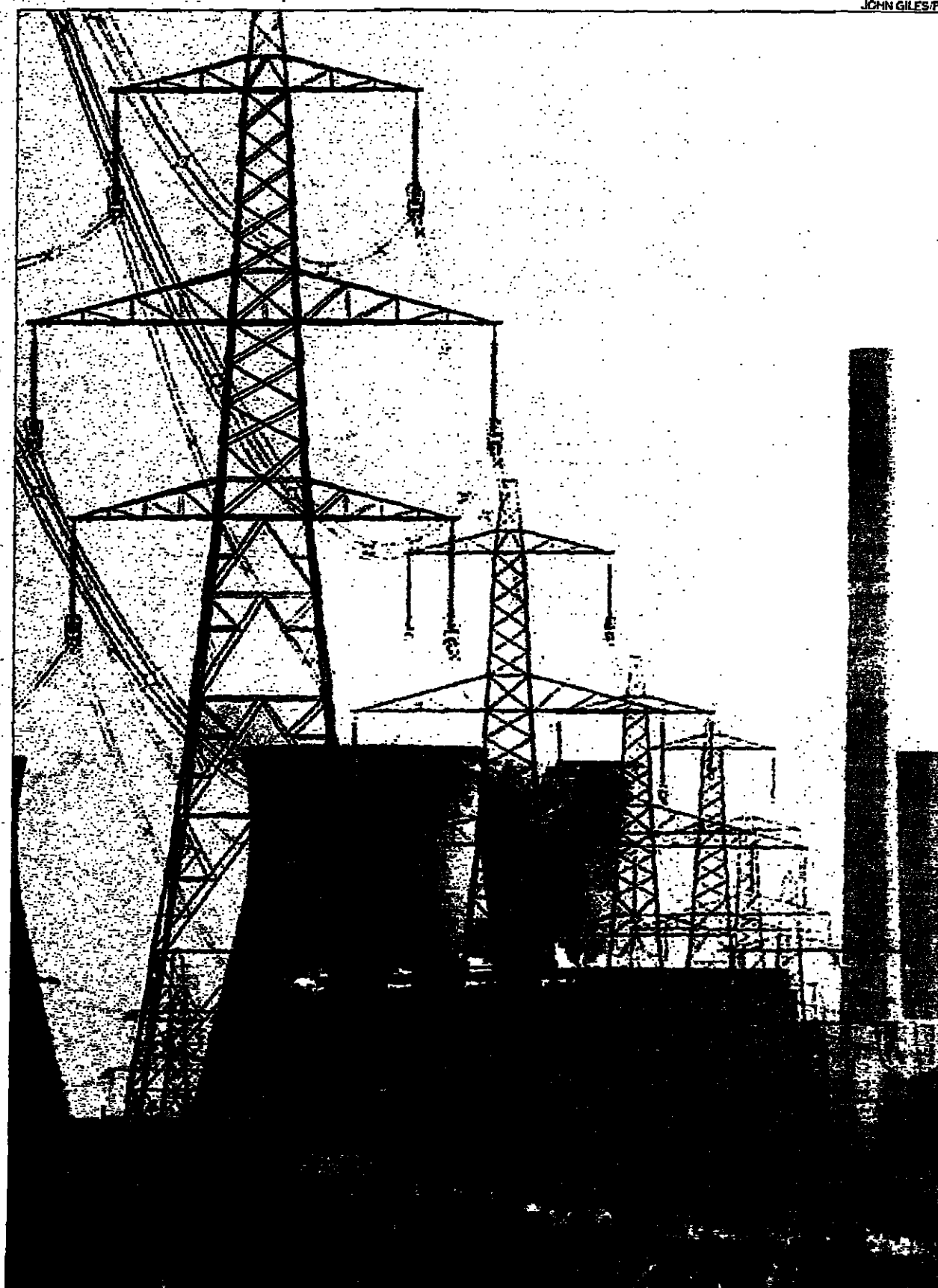
"Competition in generation is still not adequate because

the two main generators still have too strong a stranglehold," says Mr Rost, a former Conservative MP.

Mr Rost says the forum is optimistic that the electricity industry will face further reforms. "The Government is committed to competition, and even the suppliers know that in the long run they will do better for themselves and their shareholders in a genuinely competitive climate."

In the meantime the energy suppliers are fighting for each other's customers in advance of electricity deregulation.

From September, phased deregulation will occur in four REC areas, followed by a further four in October and the remaining six in December. It will involve a controlled market start-up over six months in each area, with all consumers having access to competitive supplies by June



The power-generating station at Ferrybridge, Yorkshire: the intense competition is likely to reduce prices

Planning to cut costs

THE energy market is delivering lower prices, but there are other cost savings available to industrial and commercial users that make energy efficiency a priority in business plans, Craig Seton writes.

The potential for savings is huge. The UK electricity industry had a turnover of £30 billion in 1996-97, with industrial companies accounting for 33 per cent of total sales.

With large users able to shop around for the best deals from the suppliers, the energy companies are keen to promote energy-efficiency and waste-reduction measures, including audits and monitoring.

Early warning schemes to give businesses the chance to reduce energy demands when electricity is at its most expensive are also available, such as that operated by Yorkshire Electricity for big customers that buy energy on a half-hourly consumption basis through the electricity pool.

The scheme, called Triad, is designed to alert firms about potential "trials", the small number of half-hourly periods in the year — usually on early winter evenings — when demand on the National Grid is massive and transmission charges are at their highest.

It gives companies the opportunity to reduce demand when costs rise sharply. The company issues about 25 warnings a year and faxes customers daily to predict when a triad may occur.

Most customers take the opportunity to reduce demand during a triad. According to Yorkshire Electricity, they can usually save more money on their electricity bills than they would lose by scaling down production. Such action saved £1 million in 1997 for Allied Steel and Wire, the largest of 400 customers using the service.

EFFICIENCY

The biggest users of electricity are the energy-intensive industries, such as chemicals, iron and steel, food, engineering, paper and publishing. And the largest single use of electricity is for the motors and drives that power machinery.

According to the Electricity Association, the industry's trade body, a new generation of technologies in electricity is helping industry to reduce its energy costs and improve performance, including infra-red heating, ultra-violet product curing, microwave heating and dehumidification treatment.

Martin Hopkins, the business development director of Fichtner Consulting Engineers, which advises companies on energy management, believes that most large concerns are likely to be energy efficient, but he says many smaller manufacturers are missing out on thousands of pounds in savings.

Mr Hopkins is concerned that lower prices due to the competitive energy market could deter energy efficiency.

He says: "If the price of energy comes down as a result of deregulation, then the desire to save energy goes down as well."

But he says cost savings are not the only consideration. He believes tougher European Union anti-pollution legislation that could be on the cards will encourage further energy-saving and energy-recovery measures.

The possibility of a green tax on energy use by industry and commerce to help reduce emission of carbon dioxide was held out by Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, in his Budget statement. He has asked Sir Colin Marshall, President of the CBI, to assess whether taxes should be used to promote energy efficiency and cut harmful emissions.

Illuminating market issues

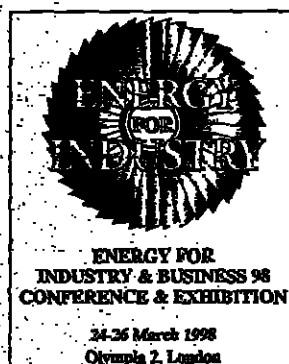
Christopher Warman on a deregulation conference

THE first major conference to examine the key issues surrounding deregulation as it affects industry and commerce opens on March 24 with an address by John Battle, Minister for Industry and Energy.

The two-day conference and three-day exhibition — at Olympia from March 24-26 — will bring together energy buyers and managers with regulators, industry leaders, suppliers, manufacturers and government to explore current issues in the gas and

electricity markets. It will also display the latest products and services, and provide practical advice on energy management and energy purchasing for both experienced professionals and the UK's two million small businesses buying electricity competitively for the first time in 1998.

Peter Rost, chairman of the Utility Buyers' Forum and chairman of the advisory panel for Energy for Industry & Business '98, says: "We anticipate considerable confusion in the market place at



ENERGY FOR INDUSTRY & BUSINESS 98 CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION

24-26 March 1998 Olympia 2, London



John Battle, Energy Minister, will give an address

this time, particularly for small businesses, given Offer's proposals to delay electricity competition until September.

Speakers at the conference include the industry regulator Professor Stephen Littlechild, Director-General of Offer and Clare Spottiswoode, Director-General of Ofgas. David Porter, Chief Executive of the Association of Electricity Producers, Peter

Nicholls, chairman and Chief Executive of Total Gas, and Nigel Shaw, director of Transco.

The conference concludes with a "Beginners guide to gas and electricity purchasing" session, aimed at the two million small businesses buying competitively for the first time. (Delegate inquiries 0171-453 5309)

Power bills reduced

AVERAGE prices paid by large industrial electricity customers have fallen by 22.2 per cent in real terms since 1989-90, according to the Electricity Association, the industry's trade body.

It says that about 2,000 moderately large consumers have seen bigger reductions of almost 25 per cent over the same period.

In addition, 50 companies with the highest annual levels of consumption have seen their prices fall by just under

18 per cent during this period.

Competition in both generation and supply, efficiency improvements and lower coal prices are given as reasons for the fall in the cost of electricity.

The association says that domestic consumers, too, have enjoyed lower prices and almost all the big electricity suppliers either froze or reduced their domestic tariffs in 1996-97.

The average bill for a typical customer fell by almost 6 per cent between April 1996 and 1997.

The organisation says the typical household pays an average of only 73p a day for all its electricity needs.

UK domestic electricity prices were the fourth cheapest in the European Union last year, the association says.

CRAIG SETON

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Gas and electricity suppliers are vying for each other's customers as competition sweeps away the energy market monopolies. Craig Seton reports

Users are winners in fuel price war

Householders and businesses in Britain can be forgiven for feeling confused when the company that has always supplied their electricity offers them gas, and their traditional gas supplier urges them to buy its electricity.

The advance of competition in the energy market since privatisation is sweeping away the supply monopolies operated by the 14 British regional electricity companies (RECs), half of which are now owned by American corporations, and British Gas.

As a result, the companies are breaking into each other's territories, offering both gas and electricity supplies to customers, often as a single "dual fuel" package.

Gas trading divisions set up by the RECs and other new gas suppliers that have entered the liberalised market have already diminished the 18-million strong British Gas customer base as business and domestic consumers exercise their right to switch to a lower-cost supplier.

Ofgas, the industry regulator, says more than a million people have changed supplier. If the figures claimed by the RECs are to be believed, hundreds of thousands more consumers are preparing to follow suit when all areas are opened to competitive gas by May. Centrica, the trading company set up as a demerged arm of British Gas to meet the competitive challenge, is in turn offering electricity to consumers and says it is taking business away from the RECs.

Most of the media and doorstep marketing being carried out by the rival energy companies is largely aimed at the huge domestic household market. Offers and counter-offers in gas, for instance, promise reductions of 15-25 per cent on existing bills. Dual fuel offers are being heavily touted.

According to the Electricity Association, the industry's trade body, all classes of customer are already paying lower electricity prices, in real terms, than in 1989-90.

The new breed of energy suppliers roaming the marketplace say that business users, too, will be able to make significant savings, depending on their energy needs and other factors.

Midlands Electricity, Nor-

web and the Eastern Group are among the RECs that have set up gas trading divisions. The Eastern Group is one of the most ambitious of the new energy companies. It owns Eastern Electricity, which has three million customers, and Eastern Natural Gas, which claims to have signed up more than 750,000 new households across Britain. The group says its aim is to supply up to six million homes nationwide by the turn of the century.

Norweb has already signed up 120,000 gas consumers in the northwest of England — its home territory — through its new company, Energi, and it has been advertising recently in the Midlands. Mike Brindle, Norweb's marketing manager, says competition is giving choice to energy users, but lower prices are not the whole story. "Price is important, but if companies do not match good price deals with an adequate level of service, they will find customers moving away from them," he says.

Norweb has also announced a marketing campaign with Tesco to award points on the supermarket chain's Club Card scheme for customers who buy its gas and electricity.

Such arrangements are likely to become much more commonplace.

Northern Electric, covering the northeast of England, has a similar scheme, which it says offers customers of Granada Home Technology savings of up to £140 on their annual energy bill. ScottishPower has joined forces with Union Energy, the TUC's energy marketing company, in a deal to supply both gas and electricity to seven million trade union members.

Midlands Gas, the gas trading arm of Midlands Electricity, claims to have picked up more than 80,000 gas customers in the areas where the market is open to competition, including 13,000 industrial and commercial users.

Centrica is fighting the erosion of its traditional customer base. It insists, though, that it is at a big disadvantage because its gas market will be

fully open to competition by May, while competition in domestic electricity will not start to be phased in until September and will not be completed until 1999.

That has not prevented it from marketing electricity in advance of full competition, and it says it has received a big response to its offer of an average of 15 per cent off customers' current bills.

It even says it has won back about 80,000 of the one million gas customers that have signed up with new suppliers. It suggests that many consumers who switched were dissatisfied with the service they received or had been misled by the sales pitches of rivals.

Both Offer and Ofgas, the electricity and gas regulators, are striving to ensure that

customers are not hoodwinked by misleading or improper sales practices as competition for their business heats up.

Only last week Ofgas issued a provisional order requiring Northern Electric to overhaul its doorstep gas sales procedures after an investigation found the company had failed to recruit and train sales staff properly.

It was the first inquiry into complaints under a new licence condition introduced by the regulator in January to protect consumers. Ofgas said it was estimated that the incident had already cost Northern Electric £1 million and would have a serious impact on its public image. The energy firm, which has already dropped one of its sales agencies as a result, was given 28 days to introduce new procedures for staff recruitment and training.

Offer has also proposed a new licence agreement to protect customers from suppliers' unacceptable practices.

The huge domestic household market is the main target



Gas rigs are producing cheaper energy for thousands of domestic consumers taking advantage of competition



More bite from super-watchdog

EVERYBODY believes that the referee is blind. So it is hardly surprising that the regulators of the gas and electricity industry have annoyed all sides at some time or another. Now the goalposts are being moved.

Clare Spottiswoode is the gas regulator. Her office is known as Ofgas. Stephen Littlechild at Offer is her counterpart for electricity. Together with Ian Byatt, who is the regulator for water, their role is to see fair play for the customers of the utilities, services that do not readily lend themselves to competition short of digging up the roads and laying duplicate sets of pipes.

The regulatory bodies were set up more than ten years ago. Critics say they were ineffective in their early years, partly because there was no experience of such bodies and partly because the dogma of privatisation took precedence over consumer protection.

The present Government is keen to merge Ofgas and Offer into a super-regulator covering finance, competition and service in gas and electricity. Privately, ministers say that there will be no role for either Ms Spottiswoode or Professor Littlechild and neither regulator seems to want to stay on anyway. Ms Spottiswoode has made it clear that she will not be applying for the new post when her contract finishes at the end of this year. Professor Littlechild is due to soldier on into 1999.

Both regulators have had some success in holding down prices, improving services

REGULATOR CONSPIRACY



Spottiswoode: gas services regulator



Littlechild: eye on electricity suppliers

and introducing competition, but any achievements have been overshadowed by the rapidly growing profits, dividends and share prices of utilities that have boosted the accounts simply by laying off staff.

Conversely, the utilities have often felt persecuted. British Gas, in particular, has had an acrimonious relationship with Ms Spottiswoode that has culminated in the dismemberment of the former state monopoly.

Earlier this year Ms Spottiswoode, with the backing of Professor Littlechild, attempted to prevent electricity suppliers from offering gas contracts to domestic customers until the electricity industry was similarly opened up. The reputation of both regulators was undermined when the electricity companies resisted vociferously and won.

The Government hopes that the setting up of a super-regulator will distance the regulator a little further from the regulated, thus making bitter confrontation less likely and eliminate differences in style between the two regulators.

Applicants for the post of super-regulator will, however, be anxious to know to what extent the role will remain independent and how far the Government will control the controller. It seems likely that ministers will lay down a tighter framework.

The super-regulator will almost certainly take a tougher line on pricing that will curb the profits earned by electricity companies.

RODNEY HOBSON

Green power takes on the big generators



Dale Vince of the Renewable Energy Company: "Our message to the Government is that we can deliver green power without a subsidy"

Sex scandals may be the scourge of today's politicians but who remembers the minister who got caught with his lights on? "Save It" may have been the slogan, but Patrick Jenkin's own residence was presented as a less than shining example of the Seventies drive to improve efficiency. While the Nineties householder and business energy user has rather less to gain from an overzealous leap into semi-darkness, there is now another rapidly emerging issue to consider in sizing up the benefits of a deregulated energy market. Do you stick with the centrally generated energy that comes from the polluting fossil-fuel power stations or is it time to consider some of the new, greener options?

The first question for any business or household is, what does the term actually mean? Must the energy source be strictly new and renewable, such as a wind turbine or a solar panel, or are there Brownie points to be had from dipping into existing hydro-electric power or plugging into incinerated waste?

With this in mind, the Government has asked the consultancy Environmental Resources Management to look at options for a green

Nick Cottam on the new cleaner power supplies that should no longer cost you the earth to buy

energy accreditation scheme — a must if new suppliers are to be treated with confidence as deregulation gathers pace. For those who decide they want their energy use to play a part in saving the planet, there is also the question of cost. Be it wind, wave, sun or another source, all the evidence suggests that few customers are prepared to pay more for the privilege.

The latest research indicates that no more than 2 per cent of consumers would be prepared to pay a premium for greener energy," says Robin Sadler, a market research consultant specialising in energy issues. "For most householders there has to be a financial or comfort incentive, although a significant number of businesses are indicating that environmental issues are a factor in their energy decision-making."

The steady march of corporate greenery may in itself be encouraging for a Government that is investigating how to achieve a 10 per cent renewable energy target by 2010, not to mention a 20 per cent reduction in CO₂ emissions generated by fossil fuel against 1990 levels by the same year.

Dr Patrick Green, senior energy campaigner with Friends of the Earth, says: "The Government needs to take a long-term strategic view of how it manages the energy market. Rather than simply encouraging generators to sell more fuel, it needs to gear up the market to provide integrated energy services, with a greater emphasis on local, renewable sources of supply. It is not equitable for the consumer to have to pay for something that is less polluting."

The only way forward in the short term, suggests Dr Green, is to angle the market in favour of renewable energy, with taxes and subsidies that recognise the benefits of switching to smaller-scale local supplies that are less polluting and more efficient. Enter the Renewable Energy Company, which was set up in 1996 and claims to be the largest dedicated supplier of green energy in Europe.

Based in Stroud, Gloucestershire, the company makes much of its ability to sell green electricity at brown electricity prices, in the short term at least, largely by dipping into plentiful supplies of landfill gas.

"Our message to Government is that we can deliver green power without a subsidy but the electricity supply market needs tweaking," says the managing director, Dale Vince. "This means measures to ensure renewable energy technologies and new suppliers are able to compete with the incumbent industry on level terms, particularly under the proposals for regulation."

In the establishment corner, Eastern Electricity has already made a pitch for a slice of the green energy market with its launch of the eco-power tariff. Pay a supplement of up to 10 per cent a year, runs the Eastern offer, and your money will go not only towards renewable energy projects, but the company will match it pound for pound, up to £1 million over the next two years. Cynics, of course, argue that the company is simply using eco-PR to fund its research into renewables, but the company's investment, and an Eastern Group renewable-energy target of 10 per cent by 2010, have been welcomed by Friends of the Earth.

'Most users will want a financial or comfort incentive'

The heat produced by a CHP system isn't wasted. In fact, it's warming a few Managing Directors' hearts.

As you may already know, CHP systems don't waste the heat created producing electricity. Instead, they channel it to provide the sites heating and hot water needs. Hence the name, Combined Heat and Power (CHP).

However, you may not know that because there is no waste with CHP, it is twice as efficient as conventional generating systems. This, combined with the lower price of gas, means a considerable reduction in energy costs. 330 industrial sites in the UK are already benefiting from CHP systems. On average, each saves over £1,000,000* a year (a figure guaranteed to warm any Managing Director's heart.)

Not all the benefits of a gas-fired CHP system are financial. As well as being

cheaper, gas is also cleaner burning, reducing CO₂ (greenhouse gas) emissions by up to 50% and eliminating SO₂ altogether. It also allows NO_x emissions to be controlled. These are factors which must be taken seriously, especially since the UK has committed to stricter emissions targets.

To help you assess how your company can benefit from CHP, we are supporting several market development initiatives, one of which is a grant programme run in conjunction with the CHPA. This is just one of a number of programmes the CHPA run which offer companies up to 90% funding for a CHP feasibility study.

If you'd like to know more about how CHP will warm your heart, without warming the planet, simply return the coupon.

* Figures supplied by Department Of The Environment, Transport And The Regions.

For a programme application pack, return coupon to: Alan Doggett, Combined Heat and Power Association, 35/37 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0BS. Or call 0171 828 4077. Fax: 0171 828 0310. e-mail agency@chpa.co.uk

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Transco

Industry subsidises home use

WHISPER it among householders, but the big energy users have found that competition is not all it is cracked up to be.

Companies using 1 megawatt of electricity have been able to shop around the regional electricity distributors for the past eight years and those burning up 100 kilowatts have shared this privilege since 1994. A medium-sized factory would probably use a megawatt while 100 kilowatts would cover a large hotel.

Domestic and small industrial and commercial users should have been able to switch suppliers from this month, but the complexities of the various computer systems used by the electricity distributors have forced a postponement until at least September.

Yet big electricity users complain that they are, in effect, subsidising the householders, who are the main beneficiaries of cuts in prices since privatisation.

The reason lies in the operation of the pool, the mechanism for matching supply to the peaks and troughs of demand. Some power stations stand idle when demand is low and are switched on to satisfy times of high usage.

Industrial users argue that their demand is more constant than that of the domestic user, who causes demand surges at mealtimes and the showing of popular television soaps. The heaviest demand is early evening, especially in winter, when lights, heating and cookers are switched on at home before offices and shops shut down for the night.

Householders have prices fixed by tariff. Large users buy according to pool prices.

When demand rises the National Grid buys extra supplies from the generators. The grid takes the cheapest offer first.

However, if the grid needs to take up more than one offer, it has to buy all the extra electricity at the highest price it accepts.

Industrial users complain

that the pool is still dominated by the two biggest generators, Powergen and National Power. Because of the way the pool operates, smaller suppliers cannot undercut Powergen and National Power. The highest price paid goes to all.

Keith Wey of the Chemical Industries Association says: "We are not at all happy with the pool arrangements. Prices are rising contrary to all fundamentals. Gas and oil prices are down and it has been a mild winter. We can't get the kind of deals that are available on the Continent. No account is taken of the demand side. It is all loaded towards the producers, who can tell us to take it or leave it."

Big users can, in theory, shop around to find which distribution companies offer the best deals. However, the prices quoted are still based on estimates of what the pool price will be, so the scope for bargaining is limited.

Mr Wey's members are particularly affected by the pool prices. ICI, for example, is an intensive user of electricity at its plants at Runcorn and Wilton on Teesside. It has tried to cut electricity costs by bringing in third parties to build neighbouring power stations to supply energy.

This ploy has also been put into operation by Boots, which opened its own £19 million power energy site at its Nottingham headquarters last spring. Boots reckons the cost will be recouped in three years. Boots intends to sell surplus power to the National Grid. It has another manufacturing plant in Scotland.

Big electricity users are hoping that a review of the pool operations ordered by John Battle, the Energy Minister, will help. The Office of Fair Trading is scheduled to report in July.

Mr Wey is not holding his breath: "We want to be sure that the review looks at the structure of the electricity industry. It is the whole structure that we feel is at fault."

RODNEY HOBSON

[illegible]

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

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[illegible]

This is the week when all eyes turn west. Except in Asia and Australia, of course, where they turn east and slightly north. Oh yes, and in Alaska, where they swivel south, if I read the map in the back of my diary correctly. Anyway, I think you get the point. Monday is Oscars Night in Los Angeles. About one billion people, it is said, will gaze at the ceremony on television (how do they work these numbers out?). And spookily enough, one billion dollars is also how much the chief Oscar contender, *Titanic*, has now taken at the box office.

ASTOUNDING. You can knock Hollywood's popcorn values, chafe at the way it steamrollers local film industries, sneer at its excesses. But this week you have to bow to its planetary sway. This is the most powerful entertainment machine the world has ever built. For better or worse, it dictates leisure habits from Anchorage to Zagreb. And on Oscars Night it puts its full panoply of hustle, swank and sentiment on display. This is the show of shows, the limelight of the

Hype, hype hooray for Oscar night

Gods, the Coronation of Tinsel. It is Graduation Day in the University of Gilt, a fiesta of fearless frocks, brazen bosoms and triumphalist toques.

Best of all, it is laced together by speeches of such toe-curling mawkishness that the viewer gazes in mesmerised horror at the spectacle of bright people making gabbling idiots of themselves when confronted by the epic intellectual challenge of walking on to a platform, saying "a very much" in standard Californianese, and walking off again. This is the one moment each year when an industry absolutely obsessed with control — to the extent of reshaping and refining its product to glacial perfection before letting the public see it — allows its guard to slip. Its luminaries can actually speak a few unscripted words for themselves. Boy, you can see why it doesn't happen more often.

Of course the notion of showbiz award ceremonies has become dreadfully devalued in recent years. There are now so many of them. Even in Britain we have the Bafas, Oliviers, Bookers, Whitbreads, Turners, Oranges, Brits, Baits, Mercuries and a dozen others. I am myself thinking of inaugurating three more: the Whingies, for luvvies who bleat loudest about not getting enough subsidy (Sir Peter Hall gets a Lifetime Achievement Award, naturally); the Wafflies, for the critics who write the most pretentious waddle about the Turner Prize shortlist; and finally the Glug-Glug-Gluggies, which would serve as consolation prizes for any *Titanic* actor not yet nominated for an Oscar (a neck-and-neck race between Leonardo DiCaprio and the iceberg, I guess).

RICHARD MORRISON

showbiz paper *Variety* estimates that in 1997 America held a brain-numbing 252 awards events, handing out a total of 3,138 prizes. Give yourself a clap, darlings. Oh, you already have. The next time that you read about an "Emmy-

winning" TV programme, remind yourself that 379 Emmys are handed out each year. You could nominate the testcard and walk away with a trophy.

Yet the Oscars retain a unique allure, perhaps because they are genuinely unpredictable. Which is remarkable, given the size of the advertising budgets the big studios deploy to woo the voters. This year, for instance, *Titanic* (with its record 14 nominations) could go into history as the most successful Oscar contender ever. But equally, it could become the least successful. It might just beat *Ben Hur's* famous haul of 11 Oscars... or alternatively it might supplant Steven Spielberg's ill-fated *The Color Purple* (11 nominations, no wins) as the most spectacular flop-on-the-night of all time. It's clearly going to be a very tough evening

for James Cameron's fingernails.

According to the bookmakers, *Titanic* will be run damn close by *L.A. Confidential*. Astonishingly, if that heartwarming tale of bent cops and sordid vice rings does win, it would be the first time that a film actually set in Los Angeles has ever carried off the Best Picture Oscar. Of course, if there is a win for our gallant British contender, *The Full Monty* — with a budget precisely 57 times smaller than *Titanic's* — that would also be the first time that a movie set in Sheffield had snatched Best Film. But I have to report that the bookies are somewhat sceptical about the Academy-charming power of unglit Yorkshire toils. Ladbrokes closed the book at 33/1 against.

More British interest will be focused on the Best Actress, where four of our leading lovelies battle with one American. The smart

money is on Helena Bonham Carter, Golders Green's very own raven-haired princess of the lacy bodice, for smouldering her way through *The Wings of the Dove*. But if curvaceous Katie Winslet snatches it for her tear-jerking waltz look in *Titanic*, keep your fingers crossed for 87-year-old Gloria Stuart to win Best Supporting Actress for her performance in the same film. Why? Because only once before have two performers portraying different ages of the same character both picked up Oscars. Can you name them?

Well, don't take too long about it. I'm almost out of space. They were Marlon Brando and Jean De Sève, who both won Oscars for portraying the Gaius Julius in Francis Ford Coppola's *Interminable* saga of friendly Mafia folk — although (it was a trick question) in different years and different films. To the reader who wrote last week to say that this column was good for nothing except "useless opinion", I say: on the contrary, sir, I can supply plenty of useless facts as well. More next week.

The Peter principle of dance survival

Christopher Bowen on the latest moves by the controversial choreographer, Peter Schaufuss

Controversy is nothing new in the dance establishment. From accusations of tampering with the classical heritage to bitching about training standards, the men (and, rarely, women) who run the world's top ballet companies seldom seem to do so without a good deal of fuss and bother.

Peter Schaufuss, for instance, has staged more than his share of "controversial" productions of the classics. Yet the unenviable reputation which follows the former international star dancer and director of English National Ballet

around like a dark cloud appears to have little to do with the finer points of Bournonville schooling or his take on *Giselle*.

He is impossible to work with. He is arrogant. He has an ungovernable temper and he's nasty to women. At least, that is how Schaufuss has lately been described in newspaper and magazine articles.

The Danish journal *Politiken* did not mince words in an editorial comment following Schaufuss's sudden departure as director of the Royal Danish Ballet after 18 months, describing him as "a sour bastard with a tendency towards pompous self-dramatisation". "Oh, I don't think they used the word 'bastard'," says Schaufuss, looking wider-eyed

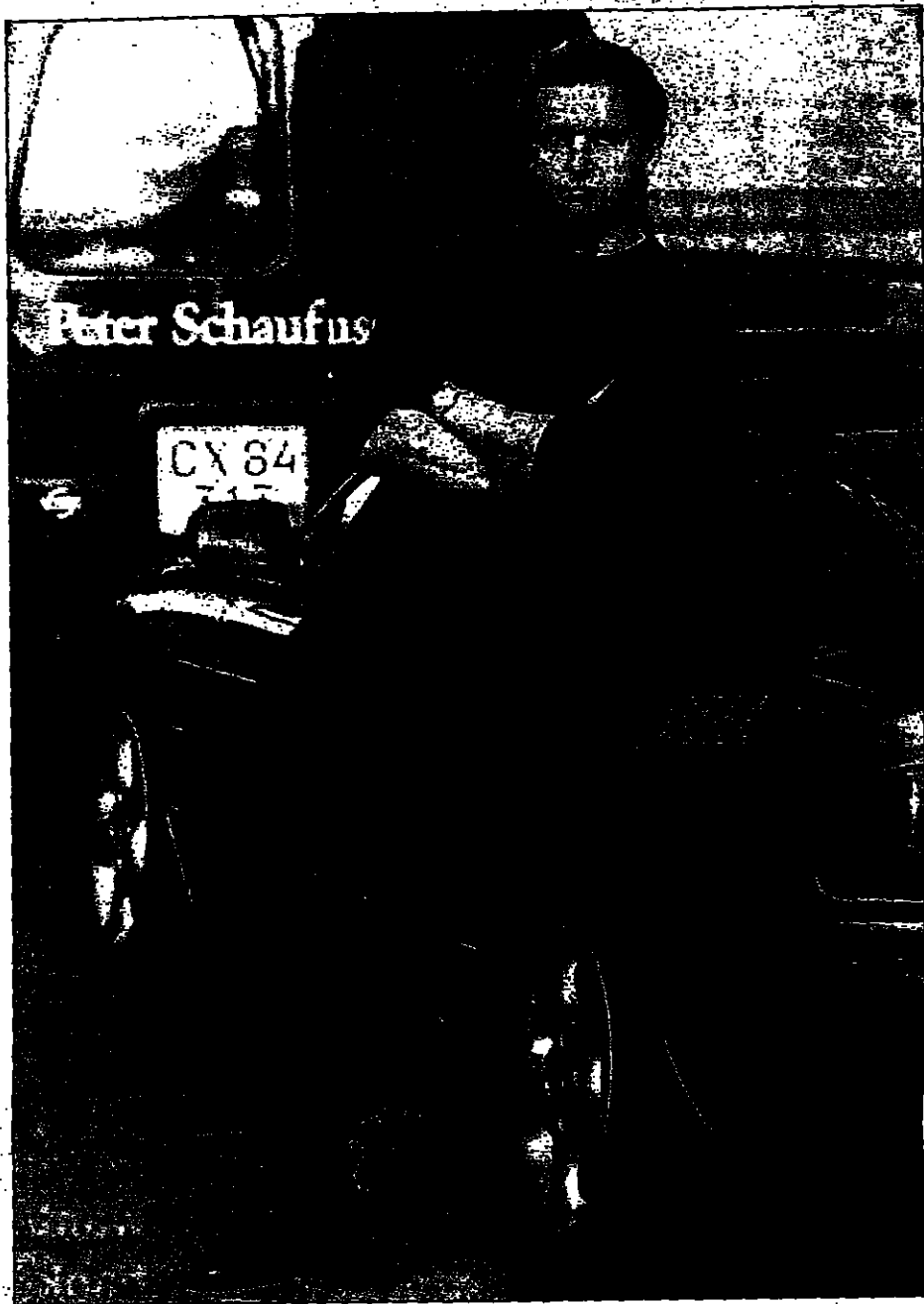
than is convincing in a man of 48. "The thing you have to realise about Denmark is that it is a small country. And far good or bad, I have a very big name there. So when there is something negative to report..." He shrugs.

Yet the fact remains that the nature of Schaufuss's hasty departures from English National Ballet, Deutsche Opera Ballet in Berlin and the Royal Danish Ballet have branded him as something of an artistic loose cannon. Not that his tenures have been unsuccessful. Indeed, Schaufuss's transformation of dreary London Festival Ballet into English National Ballet, a glamorous and exciting company with sexy, crowd-pulling guest stars, was one of Britain's great arts success stories of the 1980s. But costs were rising, and a showdown with the newly-appointed board director Pamela Harlech led to Schaufuss's dismissal in January 1990.

Bouncing right back, Schaufuss immediately took up the post of artistic director at Berlin's Deutsche Opera Ballet, where he was joined by 32 of ENB's dancers and staff. Again, he performed a successful transformation of the company's repertoire and performance standards, but his contract was once more cut short amid rumours of a rift. In January 1994 he took over artistic control of the Royal Danish Ballet, signing a seven-year deal with the company that had launched his career. Eighteen months later, he was released from his contract.

Schaufuss blames this last setback on lack of direct contact with the company due to administrative obligations, outdated union rules and "all kinds of complications". Members of the company cited his aloof, cavalier nature and an apparent lack of interest in any production that was not his own. In short, Schaufuss was not perceived as a team player.

Maybe he realises this himself, because instead of pursuing the artistic leadership of another big ballet institution



On the go: "Bad headlines might dent me a little, but you move on," says Peter Schaufuss

or large opera house-based company, he has formed his own touring ensemble. "Substantial plans," he says, had already been made for a small dance company in England. His ensemble, however, which makes its UK debut at Edinburgh's Festival Theatre next week, has instead materialised in Holstebro, a small town in northwest Jutland.

"When I was in Copenhagen I had been looking for a place to start a branch of the Royal Danish Ballet School. Talks were about to open with Aarhus [Denmark's second city] when we received a proposal from Holstebro council. During early negotiations, the possibility of a small dance company in the town

was mentioned, so when I knew I was leaving the Royal Danish, we spoke again." With a population of only 40,000, Holstebro is a far cry from the cosmopolitan cities Schaufuss has lived in throughout his career. After

London, Berlin and Copenhagen, isn't Holstebro going to seem a little dull? "Everybody asks, 'Why Holstebro?' But why not? This is where the possibilities are. I think you should be where people believe in you."

He says having his own ensemble has given him the freedom to be bolder with his artistic vision. One could reasonably argue that there is nothing terribly bold about launching a company with productions of *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *The Nutcracker*, though in Schaufuss's version the Tchaikovsky Trilogy has been given a severely Modernist look, with barely a tutu in sight.

Schaufuss links the works as if they are episodes in the same story — a story that reflects aspects of Tchaikovsky's tortured private life. If this sounds familiar, it is Schaufuss's 1986 production of *The Nutcracker* for London Festival Ballet featured a Drosselmeyer-as-Tchaikovsky figure, and a whole cast of party guests identified in the programme as the composer's relatives, and the same theme ran through his 1992/93 Berlin staging of the trilogy. But the Holstebro version is different.

"It is completely new," says Schaufuss. "What I did with this was what I was not really ready to do in Berlin."

With a company of only 21 dancers he certainly has not felt the need to recreate the traditional spectacle of synchronised swans. So with only the occasional nod in the direction of Petipa and Ivanov, Schaufuss has reinvented the Tchaikovsky trilogy with a vocabulary that melds academic dance with contemporary aesthetics. It is a very European, very classic-with-a-twist look. And the productions have been hailed a triumph in Denmark — by the very critics who gave him such a hard time over the RDB.

"I'm very grateful for that," he says. "I have been through a difficult time. But in the long run it hasn't done me any damage. Because of the quality of the work, because the love for what I do is genuine. Bad headlines might dent me a little, but you move on and continue where you left off."

● Peter Schaufuss Ballet is at Edinburgh Festival Theatre from Mon to Sat (0131-529 6000)

BOB DYLAN

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"DYLAN IS AT HIS CREATIVE PEAK"
The Independent

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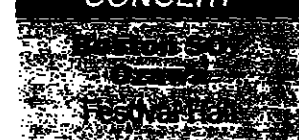
High-voltage power and glory

Expectations ran high in the Festival Hall on Wednesday at the start of the Boston Symphony Orchestra's visit, and they were more than fulfilled by a high-voltage performance of Mahler's Sixth under Seiji Ozawa. With the composer's Third similarly occupying the whole of a second concert, this first stopover on the band's five-city European tour represents neat programming designed to show just what makes the Ozawa-BSO partnership special.

Next season Ozawa will celebrate his 25th anniversary as music director of the BSO. Long artistic associations are the stuff of legends both good (Marinsky and the Lenin-grad Philharmonic) and less good (Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic), and Ozawa has sometimes been accused of going stale. But this performance brought a reminder of what a refined instrument he has made the orchestra, and it found Ozawa on his most inspired form.

The Sixth, a life-and-death struggle which ends in catastrophe, is perhaps Mahler's greatest symphonic achievement. It is also one of his most demanding works, and Ozawa, conducting from memory,

CONCERT



moulded a performance in which everything fell into place. His straightforward approach to the first movement meant plenty of surging feeling but no over-indulgence, making it quite Classical. From the start, in which the stabbing lower instruments released a shot of feverish energy, the sound had a distinctive grain; balance was uncommonly good. This is not a typically high-gloss American orchestra, but every section gave its polished best. Its power, as in the barnstorming close to the first movement, can be awesome, yet the quiet luminosity it displayed in Ozawa's fluidly shaped Andante (placed third) was no less exciting. Above all, the finale, in which almost expressionist music builds inexorably towards the dramatic blows of fate only to die away again, seldom works so convincingly as it did here.

JOHN ALLISON

7 ACADEMY AWARD NOMINATIONS

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Reggae for the big time

It has been some year for Finley Quaye. Twelve months ago he was playing backstreet joints but since the user-friendly reggae of his *Maverick* a *Strike* album struck gold, his rise to Top Ten icon has been seamless. Quaye's Best Male Artist Brit award was the crowning glory, although the past week has left it more than a little tarnished. Crucial American dates were cancelled after a bust-up with guitarist Chris Campbell saw Quaye strop off in a huff to Jamaica.

Prior to his entrance at Brixton, a solitary candle burnt centre stage. Hope? Who knows? But he certainly seemed to be in the land of the living, pimp-rolling the stage like a middleweight limbering up for a crack at the title he

POP
Finley Quaye
Glasgow

knows already has his name engraved on it. His eight-piece band kicked things off with an equally sinewy instrumental, and then, once Quaye stopped teasing and opened his mouth, the sweetest of sounds poured out. Not since Bob Marley wailed his last has reggae been embraced into the mainstream so readily as it has with Quaye.

Imagine Misty In Roots minus the furrowed brow but with extra showmanship that just skirts shy of ersatz super-market fare, and you're some way to understanding where

Quaye is at. Songs are stripped down to the barest of acoustic backings, while others show off more than a little Southern soul. Quaye is never still for a minute. One minute he's on his knees basking in his teeny-bopper idol status; the next he's strapping on a guitar to play the blues.

However, Quaye's musical melting pot may prove to be his downfall. It was clearly too much for some, as the crowd noticeably thinned out once a gorgeous *Sunday Shining*, last year's summer hit, was eventually aired. Obviously, for the pop crowd, his bland blend outstayed had its welcome. At the end the candle was still aflame, but for how long is anybody's guess.

NEIL COOPER

STEFANO DI BATTISTA/
FLAVIO BOLTRO
QUINTET
Volare
(Label Bleu LBL 6613
HM 83)

THE elegant musical rapport between saxophonist Stefano di Battista and trumpeter Flavio Boltro has already graced the latest album by French pianist Michel Petrucciani, but here they get the chance to showcase the whole range of their talent.

Their material embraces everything from romantic ballads through crisp neo-bop to a George Russell-type modal vamp, but whatever they're

Partners in cool

JAZZ ALBUMS

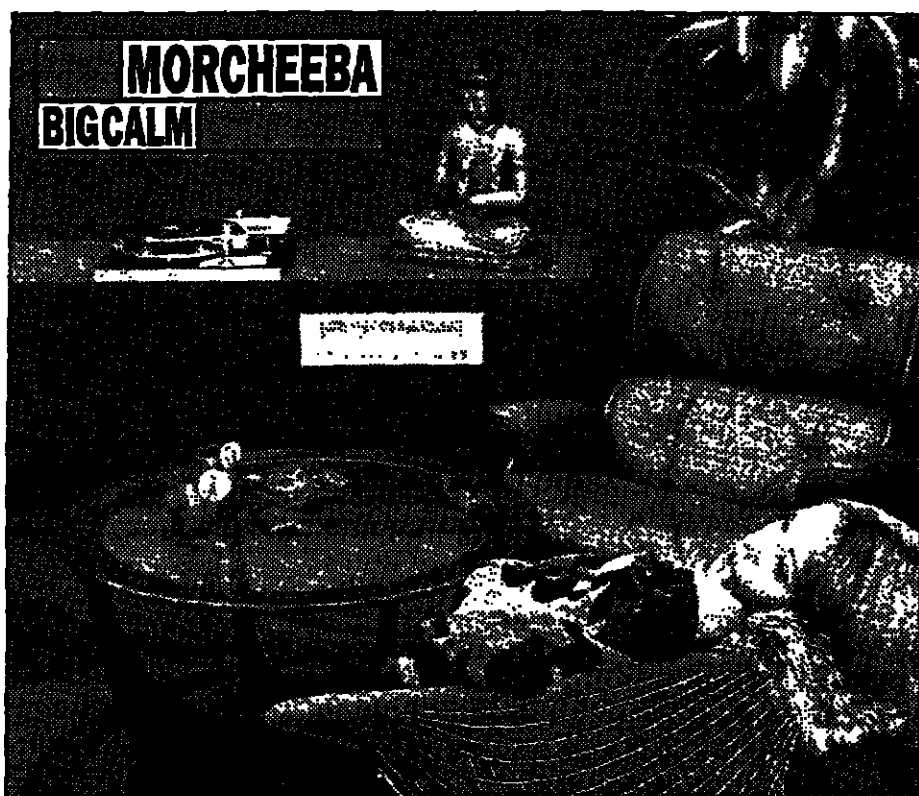
playing, they combine passion with poise; power with sophistication.

DAVE GORDON TRIO
Dozen a Day
(Zah Zah ZCD 9801)
IN ADDITION to being a jazz pianist, Dave Gordon also plays harpsichord, both in the

Baroque world and with the jazz/early music group Respectable Groove. And his improvisations on this set of compositions by modern masters — Miles Davis, Antonio Carlos Jobim — and in-house originals betray influences from both musical camps.

Thus the imaginative vitality of his soloing, neatly propelled by bassist Ole Rasmussen and drummer Paul Cavaciuti, is tempered throughout by control and restraint, almost as if Bach, rather than the blues, lay at the root of his jazz.

CHRIS PARKER



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Identi-Kylie different

NEW POP ALBUMS

KYLIE MINOGUE

Kylie Minogue
(Deconstruction/BMG 74321
51727 £14.99)

IN TENNIS the entire course of a match can often turn on one small, yet defining piece of bad luck. A similar fate has befallen Kylie Minogue's new album which, we are assured, will finally reach the shops on Monday, six months after it was first slated for release.

The initial misfortune was in naming the album *Impossible Princess* and then picking a release date that happened to fall days after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. A simple problem to rectify, you would think, but although the album remains unaltered apart from the deleted title, its release date has since been postponed more times than an early-morning jog.

The effect of all this dithering has been to reduce the album's impact while throwing its artistic merits into unusually harsh relief. A skilfully assembled collection of songs, the album finds Minogue trying on a succession of modish musical hats for size, with varying degrees of comfort. There is Björk-Kylie, declaiming oddly scanned lines over the spooky techno rhythm tracks of *Say Hey* and *Drunk*. There is indie-Kylie, getting kinda serious on *Some Kind of Bliss* and *I Don't Need Anyone*, both co-written with James Dean Bradfield of Manic Street Preachers. There is stylishly tortured, trip-hop-Kylie on *Through the Years*. And there is Madonna-Kylie contemplating her dream of personal fulfilment on the sultry, string-driven *Dreams*.

The only absent character is Kylie herself. Despite her lengthy history of hits, she still lacks a distinctive vocal signature of her own, and her essence as a performer remains as elusive as a bar of soap in the bath.

VAN HALEN

Van Halen III
(Warner Bros. 9362-46662
£12.99)

The III refers not to the number of albums Van Halen have made (that would make it *Van Halen XIV*), but to the fact that this is the group's third incarnation. Either way it is a lot of water under the bridge and yet this album sounds surprisingly fresh.



Kylie Minogue, pop songstress and musical chameleon, puts on another of her faces

In the new line-up singer Sammy Hagar has been replaced by Gary Cherone, formerly of *Extreme*. While Hagar was an old-school, heavy rock grunter, Cherone harks back to the more alert,

showboating instincts exhibited by the band's original singer, David Lee Roth.

The lyrics are maladroitness at best — "I'm just a hound-toothed heterosexual," Cherone yelps gracelessly on

Dirty Water Dogs — but that is hardly the point in a group whose *raison d'être* has always been primarily to reflect the brilliance of guitarist Edward Van Halen.

And brilliant he still is, particularly in his nimble use of techniques and sounds which vary from the big, dumb AC/DC-type riffing of *Fire in the Hole* to the translucent finger-picking tone of *Josephina*. Like Jimmy Page

CDs reviewed in *The Times* can be ordered from the Times Music Shop on 0345 023498

TOP TEN ALBUMS

- | | | | |
|----|------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | (1) | Ray of Light | Madonna (Maverick) |
| 2 | (2) | Titanic Soundtrack | James Horner (Sony Classical) |
| 3 | (3) | Let's Talk About Love | Celine Dion (Epic) |
| 4 | (4) | Life Through a Lens | Robbie Williams (Chrysalis) |
| 5 | (7) | Tin Planet | Space (Gut) |
| 6 | (13) | Pilgrim | Eric Clapton (Duck) |
| 7 | (5) | Urban Hymns | Nerve (Nut) |
| 8 | (6) | Left of the Middle | Natalie Imbruglia (RCA) |
| 9 | (8) | Maverick a Strike | Finley Quayle (Epic) |
| 10 | (9) | All Saints | All Saints (London) |

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Figures in brackets denote last week's position

The backroom boys who wield a big stick

Sir George Martin talks to Paul Sexton about the power of the producer

When pop was growing up, you barely knew the name, or even the existence, of the men behind the scenes. If, in 1964, you had asked your standard-issue Beatlemaniac who had the production credit on *A Hard Day's Night*, you would have been met by many a blank stare.

How soon times changed, and largely because of the work of that previously obscure Beatles dial-twiddler, Sir George Martin, whose farewell album *In My Life* is released on Monday (and reviewed by David Sinclair above), showed the way to today's clutch of player-managers: guys like the Chemical Brothers, Puff Daddy, Noel

Gallagher and Liam Howlett, who bark instructions from the studio control room and then run to the other side of the microphone to carry them out.

But when Martin began his musical career at Parlophone Records in 1950, the very word "producer" was uncoined, the profession virtually unrecognised. "There were about a dozen in the country," he says. "But even then they weren't called record producers, they were called 'artist and repertoire managers'."

"They didn't really shape events in the studio. Their job, rather like the A&R men of today, was to recruit talent, put them in the studio and give them an opportunity to be recorded. The mission was to record as faithfully as possible what they actually did. I was lucky to be in on the shaping of music."

By the time Martin published his autobiography, *All You Need Is Ears*, in 1979, that shape had shifted rather dramatically. "Today, the producer is there to superimpose his will on the artist," Martin wrote. "He has become, in a sense, a star in his own right."

Youth, one of the men behind the Verve's enormously successful album, *Urban Hymns*, does not believe that contemporary producers rule the recording studios. "In the 1950s and 1960s," he says, "I think producers had a lot more power. In those days, at Abbey Road, musicians weren't allowed to go in through the front door, they had to go around the side."

"Very few producers wielded the sort of power Phil Spector did in his day. The last one that did was Trevor Horn in the 1980s, but it all went wrong when Frankie Goes to Hollywood (whom Horn produced) challenged his right to that amount of control, and won. Suddenly the producer was being held responsible for the recording of an artist's work."

and Joe Perry of Aerosmith, he has a way of playing with the traditional rock'n'roll grain while avoiding the heavy metal cliché. If nothing else, it is a formula which has been proven to last the distance.

GEORGE MARTIN

In My Life
(Echo ECHCD20 £13.99)

A VANITY project by producer George Martin to mark the end of a long and distinguished career, this collection of his favourite Beatles songs performed by a bizarre aggregation of actors, comedians and middle-of-the-road superstars is a disaster of near-biblical proportions.

The horror of hearing Jim Carrey humming up *I am the Walrus* or Sean Connery reciting *In My Life* or Goldie Hawn giggling and snorting her way through an insipid supper-club version of *A Hard Day's Night* is not easily expressed in words. Even Jeff Beck's sublime guitar tone on *A Day in the Life* is swamped, like most of the tracks, by the most flat-footed, pipe-and-slippers orchestral arrangements imaginable.

Robin Williams, Phil Collins, Celine Dion, Billy Connolly and Vanessa Mae are among the other celebrities on board for the farewell ride. But if this is a tribute to the Beatles, it is difficult to imagine what form an insult might take.

ETIENNE DAHO

Eden

(Virgin CDVIRX61 £16.49)

BEST-KNOWN in this country for his 1996 collaboration with English synth-popsters St. Etienne, French cult crooner Etienne Daho is a performer impressively endowed with that uniquely Gallic brand of *je ne sais quoi*.

His sixth album, *Eden*, finds him muttering breathily (in French) over a dark funk backing track on *Un Serpent Sans Importance*, canoodling with the original girl from Ipanema, Astrud Gilberto, on *Les Bords de Seine*, and generally seducing the listener with a stylish blend of traditional melody and dancefloor-friendly rhythm tracks.

Somehow avoiding both the irony and the glitzy of other so-called easy listening acts, Daho exudes a mysterious, *Cantona*-like sensuality that will endear him to audiences well beyond the ranks of Francophile pop fans.

DAVID SINCLAIR

ETHAN HAWKE UMA THURMAN JUDE LAW



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media times

I just wanted some decent TV

John Hendricks, of Discovery, explains his huge BBC deal to Raymond Snoddy

John Hendricks was a 30-year-old university administrator when he had his big idea. Now, as the multimillionaire chairman and chief executive of a \$5 billion company with ambitions to become a \$10 billion company, he pilots his own plane to his ranch in the desert country near the border of Colorado and Utah.

The big idea seems simple now, but in the relentlessly commercial world of American television it was definitely intuitive. "I thought television could do more than provide amusement programming, and so I started this journey in 1982. I was convinced that TV could inform and entertain and be educational, but in an engaging way. It has been a great adventure," says Mr Hendricks, who owns 3 per cent, including options, of the company he formed, Discovery Communications.

It took years to raise the money to launch Discovery as a cable-television channel specialising exclusively in non-fiction television and with serious, informative documentaries at its heart. Two hundred and eleven venture capitalists, not to mention the conventional broadcasters, turned him down, and Mr Hendricks "borrowed more money than I could ever repay" before Allen & Co, the New York merchant bank specialising in the media, came up with \$3 million.

Now Discovery is viewed in 130 million households worldwide — 70 million in America; and the sister Learning channel is in 68 million American homes. Animal Planet — "all the animals all the time" — launched only 18 months ago, is already in 37 million American homes and is just beginning its international journey.

To take advantage of the explosion of capacity that digital is bringing, Mr Hendricks has launched Discovery Kids, Discovery Civilisation, specialising in history, geography and culture, Discovery Science and Home and Leisure. This month Discovery

launched two more channels: Discovery Wings — about aviation and space; and Discovery Health Network.

Yesterday John Hendricks's great adventure reached Broadcasting House, the headquarters of the BBC, perhaps the best-known public-service broadcaster in the world, with its mission to inform, educate and entertain.

After more than 18 months of negotiations Mr Hendricks and John Birt, the BBC Director-General, yesterday afternoon signed the final documents in a studio at Television Centre put in place a long-term, worldwide alliance between the "pro-social" commercial broadcaster funded by commercials and subscription revenue, and the corporation, almost entirely funded by compulsory, universal licence fee.

The BBC will now own, at no investment cost, a 50 per cent stake in all the new Discovery channels outside the US, including Animal Planet. The corporation will also get a licence fee, for all BBC programmes shown on the channels and it has been given a 20 per cent stake in Animal Planet in the US — a tribute, perhaps, to the pulling power of Sir David Attenborough and his animals.

Discovery is also acting as midwife for Sunday week's launch of BBC America, a 24-hour channel with the best of comedy, drama and news. Discovery, owned by three large cable groups — TCI, Cox and Newhouse — will market the channel and roll it out on cable networks as the move to digital increases network capacity. It will also contribute \$100 towards establishing the channel.

An independent valuation of Animal Planet gives it a \$600-million price tag, which means that, at least on paper, the BBC has made a \$120 million profit before the Discovery deal was signed.

Mr Hendricks and the BBC go back a long way. When he was a history major, his professor used



John Hendricks, the former university administrator who had a multimillion-dollar idea: "I thought TV could do more than provide amusement programming"

television to enliven his lectures. Mr Hendricks's task was to search the programme catalogues for suitable material. BBC programmes often fitted the bill. "We are both dedicated to quality," says Mr Hendricks who, despite his wealth, still sounds a lot like the university administrator he was.

The grand alliance with the BBC gradually emerged over the past few years partly because Discovery bought the rights to a lot of BBC programming. "Four or five years ago John Birt and I began sharing our vision for the digital future of our organisations, and we both think that people, over time, will migrate to better picture clarity and

to increased quality choice," Mr Hendricks says.

But why should Discovery give up equity stakes, potentially worth hundreds of millions of dollars, to the BBC for "nothing"? The BBC simply seemed the natural alliance. No one else had the scale of production or the size of programme library. The BBC needed a partner with capital because it could not use licence payers' money for risk ventures, yet wanted to take advantage of growing world markets for its programmes. Yesterday's agreements commit \$175 million to the BBC for producing programmes for the new channels, plus a further \$360 million towards

creating new international channels.

"We wanted to solidify our relationship with the BBC because we saw it as a very potent force for programme production, and I didn't want that asset working against us," says Mr Hendricks. Although Discovery has been allowed to map out its own television territory in the non-fiction genre, Mr Hendricks is aware that Discovery's success could attract well-funded rivals such as Ted Turner, now part of the Time Warner media giant, or Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, the parent company of The Times.

The rationale underlying Discovery's success is that serious documentaries lead to business success because they appeal to upmarket viewers. Later this month Discovery Communications is expected to announce profits approaching \$120 million, and this year Discovery is expected to have revenues of more than \$1 billion for the first time.

Mr Hendricks believes that Discovery and the BBC will avoid the usual tensions that arise over co-productions and the dangers of producing "mid-Atlantic" television, and says what he wants is BBC programmes as they are. "I want Discovery to be a worldwide brand, and hope in ten years to be in 300-400 million homes," he says.

He believes that between six and eight worldwide networks could be created, co-owned with the BBC. That could mean more than a decade creating assets worth up to \$4 billion. Yet, despite the grand designs, Mr Hendricks's thinking has hardly changed. It still boils down to one man's idea that he wanted something decent to watch on television. "I think a lot of people shared my view that TV could be so much more informative or valuable. We think we have succeeded if someone tunes into Discovery and, after watching for five minutes, thinks 'Gee, I didn't know that,'" says the new partner of the corporation that Lord Reith founded.

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More Today will mean more trouble

In Portland Place all is strangely quiet: not so much as a John Lewis carrier bag raised in anger. The Home Counties have stayed peacefully at home. No flotillas have sailed up the Thames in defence of the shipping forecasts. No elegantly hysterical round-robins have flooded the postroom. The *Daily Telegraph* didn't even run a leader. The folk at Radio 4 can scarcely believe their success in launching this week's revolution on the world's most conservative network in such an atmosphere of calm acceptance.

James Boyle, the controller, took 18 months preparing for his new-look Radio 4. He has plodded patiently round the country, listening to focus groups. He has researched and consulted and explained. No television controller would ever dream of such an exercise. But radio is different. Radio drifts like smoke into intimate places in people's lives and becomes their private property. Its association colours and punctuates vital daily rituals. It is structure and stimulation, a companion for tedious chores and a reward at the end of them. The controller who reschedules *Woman's Hour* is not just fiddling with a popular broadcast, he is invading his listeners' lives.

Boyle has pulled off a brilliant coup simply in winning a quiet hearing for his new network from the clever, devoted but completely unreasonable people who are Radio 4 listeners. And his schedule breathes intelligent strategic thinking. Starting the *Today* programme at 6am recognises contemporary patterns of living and will boost ratings during radio's morning peak. Stationing *The Archers* at the vulnerable 2pm junction to tug the audience across into the afternoon proper may annoy a lot of people with fixed lunch hours, but plugs a real weakness in the schedule. I shall personally follow *Yesterday in Parliament* to long-wave but without any sympathy for the self-serving, caterwaulings of MPs about such a sensible piece of spectrum-sharing.

As to the new programmes, we must wait and see. I can imagine Martin Bashir will persuade me to listen to sports programming as I did to Cliff Morgan and if looting ten minutes off *Start the Week*

Liz Forgan gives her views on what will and what won't work in the new Radio 4 schedules



damages the best talk programme in British broadcasting, I shall buy a John Lewis carrier bag and hit Mr Boyle over the head with it. But Laurie Taylor's *Thinking Allowed* is a brilliant idea and it was time for a new go at arts coverage. When *Farming Today* moves to 5-5.30am I shall miss it. *Face the Facts* set a pretty high benchmark for any successor to beat, but *The Moral Maze* was falling into formula, and *The Choice* could be an interesting alternative. Quizzes at 1.30pm sound ominously pop, but everything depends on the quality and content.

Boyle has courageously and rightly abolished children's radio. The incontrovertible evidence of 20 years is that children listen to pop music, some sport and cassettes, but flatly refuse to tune in to scheduled programming designed for them, whatever their parents, MPs, lobbyists and BBC governors do, say or wish. He is running risks with disability and ethnic minority programming by scrapping specialist slots and giving the remit to mainstream programmes. And in a real failure of nerve, the dreadful old *UK Theme*, which fills in after gale warnings, will continue to drone its gentle folk songs shared out like a rate-support grant between England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

The new schedule is not only full of good names (if rather dangerously dependent on television reputations), it is coherent, full of purpose and squarely in tune with the classic Radio 4 tradition. It was time for a change and the launch has been a triumph. But when the dust settles, there are three big questions that really matter to Radio 4's future.

Boyle's schedule has been crafted to lure listeners to listen for longer. But given the complicated relationship between radio listening and life, the question is how his audience really are to change their habits, even by a half hour here or there, when choice of listening can mean renegotiating children, employers or living routines.

The second question is not in the controller's power but it is crucial to his network. Fears of thumping down on Radio 4 were always ludicrous to anyone who knew Boyle and his record, and the accusation cannot be levelled at his new schedule. But the *Today* programme, keystone of Radio 4, is going through a period of unpredictability. The search for light and shade to enliven a dull political agenda is leading to unendurable stretches of whimsy and bluff, giving it another 30 minutes a day is asking for trouble.

The most important question cannot be answered yet. It is about the nature of Real Radio — programmes made by people whose passion and brilliance is in making pictures with sound, whose creativity is set free by the wonderful unliteralness of radio. They are not necessarily great audience-getters. They do not deal in the actuality, which is increasingly Radio 4's strength. They cost a lot in radio terms. They do not transfer to, or come from, television. But they are unique to BBC speech radio and almost unique to Radio 4. They are artists of the highest order and they make broadcasting that speaks to the imagination. If Piers Fawcett, Matt Thompson and Noah Richler were television producers, they would be household names. As it is, they are the ones whose programmes you see people listening to while they sit in stationary cars because they cannot bear to turn off before the end. And they are leaving BBC radio because there is no

room for them to do what they do consummately well.

The reasons lie far away from Boyle's new schedules. But for me, the real test of Boyle's declared and magnificent ambition, to preserve the genius of Radio 4 for future generations, will be whether, in the fullness of time, the new strengths he is building into his network allow him to restore Real Radio to its rightful home.

• Liz Forgan is a former managing director of BBC Radio.



Stepping out: Radio 4 personalities at the launch of the new schedules by James Boyle this week

Boyle's lost generation

Carole Midgley speaks for the missing listeners

POOR James Boyle. Trying to make even the most trifling changes to Radio 4 is like prising the last half-price tin of salmon from the fingers of a doughty pensioner in Tesco. His mission is to attract a wider and younger audience before its current one dies out. Speaking as one in the former bracket, I would say he has to work fast.

Were it not for the fact that I am a journalist and haven't begun my working day without listening to the *Today* programme, I confess that I would scarcely think to switch on Radio 4. My friends, twenty and thirtysomethings with university degrees and professional careers in the Bar and education, cheerfully admit the same.

If we find ourselves near a radio mid-afternoon, we are more likely to switch on Radio 1's cleverly observational DJs Mark and Lard than, say, *The Afternoon Shift*. If we want an intelligent talk show, Radio 5 Live's Nicky Campbell is every bit as sharp as Radio 4's presenters. Even *The Archers* does not seem to have penetrated the consciousness of the mid-youth generation in the way that it might have 20 years ago.

This is not because we have all become uncouth and uncultured; it is because the world has moved on and there are so many more exciting options these days — 200 radio stations, multifarious cable and satellite channels, the Internet, ten-screen cinemas.

Radio 1 has millions more listeners than Radio 4. But if presenters are axed and programmes moved in the schedule, do its young listeners march on Broadcasting House? Of course not. If they don't like it, they switch to another station.

After ten hours' slog in an office you often simply don't have the energy to start navigating a cumbersome schedule. And that is another of Radio 4's problems. It has never been very good at promoting itself. The fact that Boyle is making the schedule more user-friendly, advertising and trailing more programmes, has been denounced by some of Radio 4's diehard fraternity as resorting to the vulgar tactics of the marketplace. Well, in this digital age, the marketplace is exactly where Radio 4 and every other station is, public service broadcaster or not.

When the occasional listener chances upon a drama or a science programme it is almost always fascinating. But Boyle is right. Potential audiences are dissuaded from coming to Radio 4 because they do have an impression of it being staid and stuffy.

Boyle's task is to find a knife-edge balance, modernising without alienating the existing audience. This is something that newspapers had to confront years ago. The fact is that modern need not mean cheap, and change does not have to mean dumbering down.

BBC2 goes for fantasy

■ The BBC recently decided not to dramatise Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour*. Influenced by the negative reception for Channel 4's period piece, *A Dance to the Music of Time*, it wondered what chords the work would strike with modern viewers.

Instead, Mark Thompson, BBC2 controller, is cooking up an ambitious four-part adaptation of Merlyn Peake's 1940s fantasy masterpiece *Titus Groan*, about the heir to the dreamlike castle of Gormenghast.

The project is being handed to Michael Wearing, the former head of BBC drama series who was responsible for *Our Friends in the North*. He is taking retirement but, though no longer an executive, he will work as a freelance as part of the deal. He has decided not to include Peake's third book, *Titus Alone*, which deals with the hero's wanderings when cast out of Gormenghast. Too close to reality? "Not if it works," says Wearing. "It means I've something left for a sequel."



Titus Groan: a stage version



■ I'M distressed that one of my favourite Radio 4 programmes, *Mediumwave*, which I've helped in a small way, is being dumped after nearly five years. Only last year John Birt upbraided me in the foyer of Broadcasting House for daring to spoil his Sunday morning shower with an impertinent item about the crisis in the BBC's drama department. But I'm even more surprised to see the sketchy details of its successor, hideously entitled *The Message*, now at 4.30pm on Friday. The programme, from Manchester, starts in three weeks but as yet has no presenter. Roger Bolton, who has mellowed into an excellent *Mediumwave* presenter since Vincent Hanna's sudden death, is tied up in London on Fridays, making Channel 4's *Right to Reply*.

Even stranger is the decision to give *The Message* to producer Lindsay Leonard, whose spell editing *Mediumwave* in 1995 was followed by a descent into the BBC's sound archives. Experienced *Mediumwave* producer Sarah Eldridge is left twiddling her thumbs. But that is what controller James Boyle wanted: a programme focusing on listeners' experience of the media, rather than that of the experts. A mix of the two might make better radio.

■ MUCH newspaper and airtime was wasted on wrong speculation about the Budget. So, congratulations to *The Financial Times*'s Nicholas Timmins, who accurately reported details of the increase in child benefit, and the delay in taxing it. Shame his scoop was buried away inside Saturday's paper.

■ CHANNEL 5 celebrates its first anniversary in ten days' time. How do the experts mark it? Ian Lewis, broadcast director of Zenith Media, the powerful

airtime buyers, is pretty downbeat. "It could be worse: C plus to B minus."

■ IT IS not just the soaps that are battling to attract children with lots of new young characters. The next series of *Casualty* on BBC1 will open with a two-part story about the way heroic children cope with a fire at their school. It's a sharp switch in direction away from gore and sensational aircrashes. But one more sign that family programmes are the new buzz genre.

■ NATIONAL MAGAZINES is launching a new glossy magazine for new parents called *M* in May. *M* stands for modern, monthly and, as ever... mothers!



Early bath: Naughtie and MacGregor

■ JAMES NAUGHTIE, the *Today* presenter, sounded a bit downcast about the programme starting half an hour earlier at 6am. He plans to rise at 3.30am, as usual, but whizz out of the house by 3.45am, instead of 4am. Can he really manage to get ready in 15 minutes? And does that mean cutting out the shower? "Oh no, that wouldn't be fair on Sue."

■ THE BBC's controversial Lottery scratchcard show starting on Saturday, March 28, is being recorded tomorrow at Pinewood Studios. But producers are worried that too few people have volunteered. The Corporation was so concerned about security that it conducted a pilot last Saturday, with off-duty Camelot staff acting as stand-ins.

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Rory and Wendy Alec set up the Christian Channel, the UK's first, after claiming God had told them TV was the medium to start a revival

If you feel God is missing from your life, you could always try switching on the TV. A new Channel 4 documentary to be screened next week will show missionaries' superhuman efforts to spread the Christian word in the UK as church attendances slump to a record low.

Two US Mormons, Sister Cummings and Sister Cherrington, are seen trudging around rainy Derbyshire, still smiling as doors are slammed in their faces.

Amateur Braga, a Brazilian from the Go To The Nations church, prays vociferously for peace outside Stormont Castle, and thanklessly tours Soho strip joints trying to persuade the male clientele that church is really much more fun.

But Rory and Wendy Alec have chosen an altogether

Pray per view

Carol Midgley on the spread of UK television evangelism

more glamorous way of spreading the message. The South African husband-and-wife team.

Newcastle, set up the Christian Channel, the UK's first, after claiming they heard God's voice telling them TV was the medium to bring about a religious revival. Wendy, a former nightclub singer, says she became a charismatic Christian after seeing Jesus's face in a club lavatory mirror.

While many religious leaders lambast television as an evil force peddling sex and violence, Wendy and Alec celebrate its ability to reach millions in their living rooms.

was living as a man today he "would be with the man on the street, and in all the clubs".

The channel runs from 4am to 11am, featuring a lot of preaching US evangelists and "wholesome" family entertainment, with the catchphrase "watch it religiously". But there are plans to make it a 24-hour operation later this year, complete with a Christian shopping channel for tapes and books. The channel has already got into trouble with the ITC, which issued a warning after it televised an exorcism.

Each day Rory and Wendy sit on a big blue sofa to talk directly to their flock. But whether they are spreading the message very far remains to be seen — its host BSKy8 channel is reportedly watched for only one minute per person per week in satellite homes.

Witness: Mission Impossible. Channel 4, March 23

A big commercial break for the BBC

The top brass of the BBC were celebrating in Broadcasting House on Wednesday evening. It was definitely a case, as *Private Eye* would put it, of "trebles all round".

Although there were many sighs of relief, the dinner was not to mark the fact that some of the most radical scheduling changes in Radio 4's history have, so far at least, raised barely a squeak from the station's notoriously demanding audience.

Any notion of celebration at being able to dispatch most of parliamentary broadcasting into the outer darkness of long-wave, despite political opposition, has had to be postponed. The plan now is to let Gerald Kaufman and his Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee sound off on the issue first and then go ahead with the original plan after a decent interval of, say, a day or two.

In a week of change for the BBC, the dinner on Wednesday served to mark its most dramatic step in the direction of commercialisation so far. Yesterday morning a series of joint-venture deals were signed between the BBC and Discovery Communications, the American company that has proved, in a ruthless market, that there are big bucks in non-fiction and documentaries.

The deal will give the BBC 50 per cent of new Discovery channels outside the American channels, including *Animal Planet*, which is sure to sweep the world — and without the usual problems associated with expensive, expensive actors. There will be other channels devoted to people, arts, science and medicine and there is a possibility of collaboration on an educational channel for Africa.

Before the deal has even been signed, the BBC is \$120 million (£75 million) better off, at least on paper. It has been given a 20 per cent stake in *Animal Planet* in America and some analysts estimate that the channel is already worth as much as \$600 million.

The BBC is to be congratulated on its enterprise in taking its programme-making skills and library around the world, and obtaining equity stakes in channels rather than the usual modest transmission fees. In this respect the public-service BBC puts the supposedly commercial ITV companies to shame. Despite consolidation among the latter, most of them are still surprisingly insular and have yet to discover foreign opportunities in a serious way.

Yet amid the celebrations and yesterday's

transatlantic satellite press conferences, there are a few reasons for unease at the BBC deal. It may not lead to an immediate privatisation of the corporation, but if it is successful, the scale of the money involved could change the nature of the BBC.

There is, first, the irony that by jumping into bed with Discovery, owned by some of the largest US cable companies, many BBC programmes will no longer be available to the corporation's public-service cousin in the US, the underfunded, hand-to-mouth Public Broadcasting System.

A close watch should also be kept to make sure that Discovery does not start dictating the BBC's domestic programme-making agenda — although Discovery says that it likes BBC programmes the way they are and has no intention of interfering. We shall see. But it is good that Discovery is investing \$175 million in BBC programming for the new channels, and the company can also be helpful in marketing BBC America, the new 24-hour channel aimed at the US that launches on Sunday week.

Perhaps the trickiest problem will be if the BBC and Discovery do manage to create really valuable assets around the world. The Discovery chairman, John Hendricks, believes that over a decade the two organisations can create jointly six to eight co-owned worldwide channels worth between \$3 billion and \$4 billion. If he is right, what happens next? There would be a stream of dividends, of course, and how would it affect the public status of the BBC in future if such channels were ever floated on world stock markets? And what if a future government were to peg the licence fee and suggest that the BBC make up the difference by selling off slices of its new international assets?

For the moment, at least, let us celebrate the completion of an imaginative and innovative deal that might give a boost to quality programming and ultimately earn a great deal of money.

But before the BBC's top brass start dreaming of share options in international satellite channels, they might raise their glasses to programmes such as *Kaleidoscope*, *The Afternoon Shift*, *Breakaway*, *Week Ending*, *Mediamware* and *Science Now*, which will all fade into the ether come the Radio 4 reorganisation on April 6. But at least Ned Sherrin's *Love Ends* has been spared the controller's cut. They will be back in July after a breather.

Raymond Snoddy

LEADERS of the cinema and broadcasting industry saw the likely future of film last night — the electronic cinema, Raymond Snoddy writes.

A consortium including BT, Virgin, JVC and Channel 4 showed digital clips of films ranging from *Tomorrow Never Dies*, *The Madness of King George*, and *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, to *Circle of Friends*. The films were chosen to reflect contrasts in colour, texture and style and to demonstrate how close digital transmission is getting to the quality of 35mm film.

For years, technologists have been exploring ways of delivering films in digital form by satellite to dishes at

By beam to the screen

individual cinemas. This would replace the cumbersome and expensive business of copying prints and then delivering them to cinemas all over the country. In Britain there are 2,000 screens and in America 28,000.

Until now, neither the studios nor the cinema chains have been happy with digital picture quality and are still to be convinced that broadcasting expensive films direct to cinemas will be hacker and pirate-proof.

On the evidence of last night's high-quality digital demonstration, the day

of the electronic cinema is coming closer — with obvious implications for companies such as Carlton Communications, Technicolor and Kodak.

"This is the most advanced demonstration we know of," says Jon Blumberg, the head of new business at BT's broadcast services, who put the loosely-knit consortium together. Much of the improvement in digital picture quality comes from better projectors and it is difficult to spot any flaws or artificiality in the colours.

Cinemas goers at experimental

showings in Ealing, West London, liked the digital pictures. More than 1,000 regular filmgoers were invited to view a film without being told anything about the technology used and were asked to rate the overall picture quality. Ninety-two per cent said it was as good or better than normal.

"We are trying to open up the debate," says Mr Blumberg, who believes a commercial case can be made for the electronic cinema, even though the high-definition projector being used is not yet in mass production.

BT believes that the technology could also be used to relay live sports events and pop concerts to cinemas.

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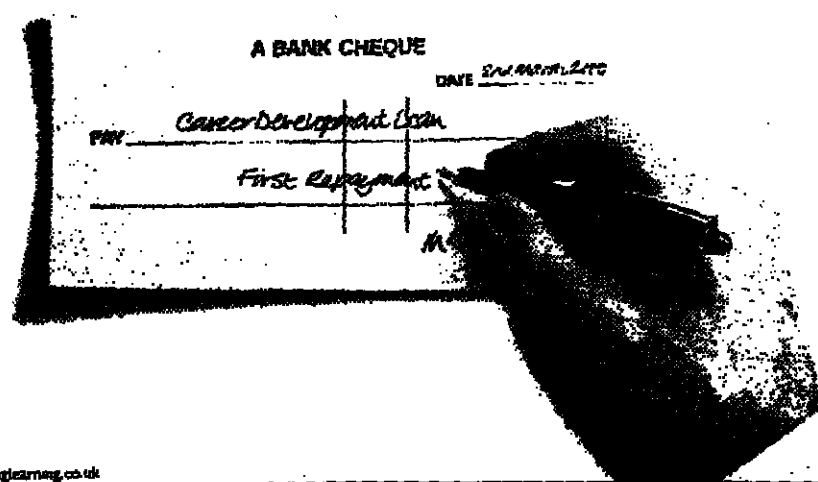
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EDUCATION

Helen Penn questions whether the Budget will deliver Labour's promises on nursery education

Are we failing children?

The Budget, ministers explained, was about children. As well as increased child benefit, mothers will have a childcare tax credit to enable them to buy "quality childcare". The education budget will also be increased by £250 million. Children deserve "the best start" we are told.

There is a contradiction between the two policies, childcare and education, both of which cater for young children. On the one hand, childcare, like the ill-fated voucher scheme, is demand-led. Parents must go out and seek the childcare and buy it from the private sector, relying on a creaking regulatory system to guarantee quality, whatever that is — with very few penalties, if any, if the quality is deemed not to have been met. Access depends not on the child's needs, but on the mother or father's ability to sustain a viable job. Moreover, private childcare is least likely to be available in poor areas where dependence on welfare benefits is highest. This is one interpretation of "best start".

Education, on the other hand, is supply-led. It is accepted that children need and benefit from education. It matters for their well-being and their ability to learn, and they are entitled to it whatever their parents' circumstances and wherever they live. The criteria for what constitutes good education are laid down by the Government — it is the arbiter of quality, and it can insist, through a variety of fiscal and administrative methods, that best practice is met. This is another interpretation of "best start".

As working parents of young children know, the problem is that they have to use both systems at once. Nursery education is a part-time service, for no more than two-and-a-half hours a day. Reception classes in schools, where many

four-year-olds end up instead of the more relaxed nursery education, are daunting for young children. They also do not offer times that match those of work. In those families beyond the nursery bracket, young children must be shipped between one system and another, from private childcare to education in the public sector, from one set of operating standards to another, learning to adapt, sometimes painfully, in both places.

Is it reasonable to expect young children to be so adaptable and tolerant of where they are put, or to ask their parents to accept such inconsistencies between care and education? Can we envisage a more coherent system, one that does not ask so much of either parents or their children in making a series of arrangements? The answer depends on where you look.

Many European countries have solved the problem. The Nordic countries, for example, operate a universalistic welfare system that offers a publicly funded (with parental contributions) system until children begin school at six or seven, and offer an after-school service as well. France has a public

system of *écoles maternelles* which are education-based but offer sensible hours. Other European countries have variants on one or other of these systems, but it is generally accepted that children benefit from staying in one place as much as possible, and that public funding — although not necessarily direct public provision — secures the most reliable standards and ready access.

However, civil servants have for many years been conditioned to look to America for a model. Here, the story is very different. There are chaotic contradictions on a larger scale than our own. There is a poorly regulated private childcare market — long the concern of many academics and campaigners — and some high-profile early education interventionist programmes, such as Head Start. This programme is much hyped as a solution to poor educational attainment, but it has come in for some severe criticism from the black American communities at whom it has largely been aimed. Given the extremely divided nature

of American society — one of the higher incarceration rates in the world, and a life expectancy for black males less than that for males in Bangladesh, critics argue that to focus on educational interventionist programmes, or even on parental training programmes, as a solution to poverty is simply to ignore the damaging wider cultural context in which the programmes are administered.

Which way should we look, across the Atlantic or across the Channel, for our examples? Or is there a uniquely British middle way? There are surely innovative solutions — for example, using the SSO or so free-standing nursery schools which still remain, a leftover from the 1950s and 1960s, which are mostly located in areas of need, as "children's centres" that offer both childcare and education. Some have already been extended and converted for such use by enterprising local authorities. Or working with voluntary or non-profit groups to create "community nurseries" that offer a range of childcare and education facilities to local communities. The big childcare voluntary organisations have tended to work with the narrowest range of vulnerable groups within a social work rather than an education framework; perhaps with suitable incentives they could be persuaded to extend the range of their work.

The Treasury is supposed to be leading on such issues and seeking a solution to meet the ambitious welfare-to-work rhetoric of Gordon Brown. Can it really deliver without addressing the contradictions between care and education? Or without spending new money, however prudently, on fresh solutions?

Dr Penn is senior research fellow at London University's Institute of Education.



Best start: can the Government provide schooling without spending new money on fresh solutions?

Many parents, both in Britain and in the United States, are shunning schools for 'home-made' classes. How does it work?

Private lessons can make perfect sense

In a little-noticed educational revolt, thousands of American parents are refusing to send their children to school, preferring to teach them at home.

According to a recent report, 1.23 million American children are taught by their parents, few of whom have any conventional teaching qualification. Another study says the number of children in "homeschooling" should double over the next five years.

The rise is startling, given that there were only 10,000 American children taught at home in 1970, when the first reliable figures were tabulated. The figure in Britain is also puny in comparison: 20,000

children are taught at home today, although that is twice that of 1993.

Why are so many American parents shunning schools for "home-made" classes? Who are these people who prefer the "school of life" for their children rather than the usual institutions? Are they oddballs at loggerheads with society or idealists who believe that the secret to a successful education lies elsewhere than in the hands of trained teachers?

A paper published recently by the Cato Institute, a Washington social-policy think tank, says "the rise of homeschooling reflects broadening dissatisfaction with formal education in the United

States". In a Gallup poll on the public's attitudes towards state schools, 45 per cent of respondents gave America's schools a C, D or F grade.

This dislike is based on two reasons. Increasingly, particularly in metropolitan areas, state schools are churning out illiterate or semi-literate children ill-equipped for a high-tech society and economy.

Studies have shown, for example, that American 13-year-olds have arithmetic skills worse than those of 13-year-olds in all other developed countries.

The second reason is more elementary: fear. Many of America's state schools are crime-infested places, where drugs are traded, teachers threatened and guns found in

student lockers. Taking advantage of America's laws, which do not prohibit the teaching of children at home, many parents have set in motion a flow away from state schools that seems unstoppable.

The Cato Institute report divides parents who opt out into two groups: ideologues or pedagogues. The former consist mainly of religious conser-

vatives who want to ensure that their children's education is unsullied by the "godlessness" of America's secular schoolrooms. Such parents are also described as "essentialists": their argument is not so much with schooling per se as with today's schools. Their homeschooling methods — the Bible, the three Rs, tests, grades, detention and corporal

punishment — would be familiar to any schoolteacher from the last century.

The pedagogues — often highly educated — opt out because they think that conventional schooling stifles the imaginative instincts of a child.

Court battles in the 1970s helped to establish the boundaries, and nobody now disputes that homeschooling is lawful in the US. According to the National Homeschool Association, "homeschooling is legally permitted in all 50 states, but laws and regulations are much more favourable in some states than others".

States such as Texas, Idaho and Oklahoma, for example, take a laissez-faire approach: parents there have no requirement even to inform the state of their decision to teach their children at home.

In states such as New York and Massachusetts, on the other hand, parents must inform the local educational authorities, submit a curriculum for review and allow

home visits from education inspectors.

Increasingly, children who are the products of homeschooling are finding their way to universities such as Harvard and Yale, and attracting national attention.

Last year, Rebecca Sealton, a Brooklyn 13-year-old, did more for the image of homeschooling than any impassioned treatise by winning the National Spelling Bee, a contest broadcast live on television. She was one of 17 homeschooled students among the 245 competitors. She won, spelling the word "etonym" in a "spell-off" with her nearest rival. And she knew what the word meant.

As Rebecca hugged her ecstatic parents on camera, people in America took notice of another word, too: "homeschooling".

TUNKU VARADARAJAN

Homeschooling: Back to the Future. By Isabel Iyann, Policy Analysis paper no. 241, the Cato Institute, 1000 Massachusetts Avenue, Washington DC 20001



Lessons while travelling the world: Charlton Greene, with his father and mother, wants to be a rocket scientist

GRADE PERFORMANCE IS TOP CLASS

While other nine-year-olds are at school, Charlton Greene travels the world with his cabaret-singer mother and businessman father from their London home. Neither has any experience of teaching. John O'Leary writes.

But that has not stopped Charlton passing his first GCSE, in mathematics, six years ahead of schedule. Chemistry, physics and biology are next on the agenda, and he has already started an A-level course in mathematics.

Charlton started school in Kingston upon Thames in southwest London at the age of five, but regular lengthy absences on his mother Michele's tours meant that a place could not be kept open for him. His parents set about teaching him from home-learning courses.

Martin Greene, Charlton's father, says: "We felt we had enough talents between us to train the children in the way that we thought they should be brought up."

"I don't see this as one in the eye for schools because they suit most people. But a lot of children do not appear to know very much and I am sure that more parents could teach their children if they tried."

Charlton, whose Grade C made him one of the Edexcel board's youngest successful candidates, says: "Learning at home has been better because if I don't understand something, we can go over it again. I was always quite good at maths and I think I will manage A level."

On the cabaret circuit, Charlton and his sister take their turn in singing. But his long-term ambition is to be a rocket scientist.

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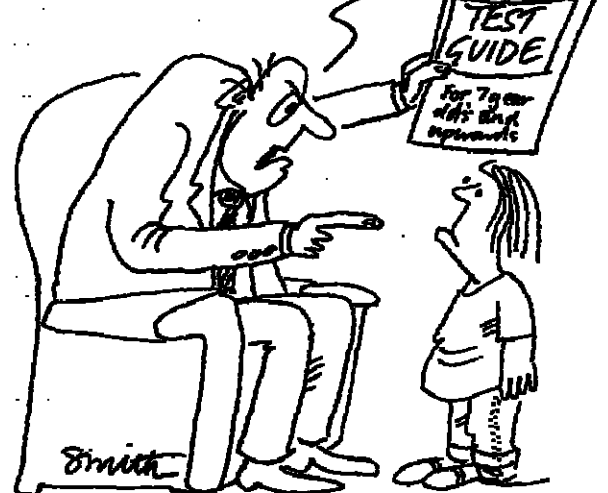
THIS YEAR'S national curriculum tests are less than two months away, and revision is in full swing in many schools. John O'Leary writes. A series of guides to the tests, sponsored by The Times, is now available to help parents to play their part. Last year, the guides covered only the Key Stage 2 tests for 11-year-olds. Now the series has been extended to include the full range of tests in English, mathematics and science, adding those taken at seven and 14.

The market for revision guides has expanded rapidly, as the tests have become more important to both schools and parents. But the series published by the Stationery Office is the only one to contain actual questions from last year's tests.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, which is responsible for the tests, not only selects suitable questions, but also offers advice on using the guides. The separate books for each subject include a marking scheme and instructions on translating the scores into national curriculum levels.

The guides — particularly

LISTEN! READ THIS AND YOU WON'T FINISH UP LIKE BART SIMPSON!



those for seven-year-olds — are not intended as crammers, but as a means of making pupils and parents more familiar with the tests they will face in May. Though the results are not used to select children for schools, they may affect the classes in which they are placed next year.

The results are also of increasing importance to schools. Those for 11-year-olds are used to compile league tables of primary schools, while results at 14 will be the

basis for a new "progress indicator" to be included in secondary school league tables for the first time this year. Even average results at seven are included in annual reports and are used by discerning parents to help choose their children's first school.

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THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OPENS MINDS AND OPENS DOORS

Thornton coaxes stirring exhibition from Gold Cup outsider

Cool Dawn rises to big occasion

By RICHARD EVANS
RACING CORRESPONDENT

COOL DAWN, bought with the intention of being a "nice, safe lady's ride" in point-to-points, completed a Festival of Fairies yesterday when he won an incident-packed Cheltenham Gold Cup at 25-1.

The ten-year-old, trained in Dorset by Robert Alner and carrying the colours of Dido Harding, finished 14 lengths ahead of Strong Promise with Doran's Pride, the 9-4 favourite, third.

Andrew Thornton, a much-improved rider this season, set out to make all the running on Cool Dawn and those tactics were crucial for two reasons. Being at the head of affairs meant he avoided the drama behind him when Cyborg went lame just before the seventh fence. Tony McCoy had to pull the Martin Pipe-trained runner wide of the obstacle and in the process forced See More Business, the 11-2 second favourite, and Indian Tracker away from the fence — and out of the race.

Just as important, Thornton's determination to make the race an end-to-end gallop helped to exploit any stamina flaws in his rivals and put the accent on accurate jumping — and in the climb to the line that meant the difference between victory and defeat.

For more than a circuit there was little change at the head of affairs as Cool Dawn was shadowed by Barton Bank and the two greys — Sunny Bay and Senor El Beirum — with Doran's Pride travelling comfortably just behind the leading group.

Running to the top of the hill on the second circuit, Thornton gave Cool Dawn a breather before kicking for home. Doran's Pride moved up menacingly approaching three out but made a mistake which effectively ended his chances.

Turning for home, Strong Promise was still travelling comfortably well behind the leader, and after jumping the last inched ahead of Cool



Cheltenham Festival

Dawn. However, doubts about the ability of Strong Promise to see out the extended 34-mile trip were confirmed in the final 100 yards as Cool Dawn edged back into the lead.

"Cool Dawn stays very well," Thornton said. "He has finished third in an Irish National, loves the top of the ground. He gallops and can quicken a little bit as well. The main thing is to get them all at it because there are not that many horses that do stay the Gold Cup distance."

The thrilling victory in the sunshine was the icing on the cake this season for a jockey whose career was, by his own admission, heading for the scrapheap not long ago. The problems began when he moved south and changed his riding style, with his irons fashionably short. "I was unbalanced on my horses and was not relaxed on them — and could not use my legs."

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3. Doran's Pride, 9-4, R. Dunwoody, 9-4 fav
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Amanda at play in the graves of Academe

Curious how many detective stories have Oxbridge settings. Possibly this is because most of the literary and media elite went to one or the other, while the rest of the population rather enjoy the idea of them bumping each other off.

Cambridge certainly enhances the eerie, otherworldly atmosphere of *Silent Witness* (BBC1). The haunting Latin funeral song of the diths waltz over ancient walls, covered with cypress and creepers, is a staff poem.

Or is it? The victim is a classic "nasty" wife, an outwardly respectable don who tortures her long-suffering, wimpish don husband with her infidelity and unpredictable mood-swings. Beneath the placid academic lid seethes a cauldron of fear and loathing.

Apart from the humiliated husband, there is the embittered, drunken Italian waiter, a hooded

assailant in the street and a variety of jealous, bloodied or otherwise sinister students. By the time we get to the cliffhanger (Is the feisty, fiery undergraduate about to be killed, and by whom?) we had more suspects than an inter-university Cuedo contest. In most respects *Silent Witness* is a stylish, but utterly conventional whodunit, a complex puzzle as potently compulsive as a Rubik's cube.

But it has one magic ingredient: Amanda Burton. As forensic pathologist Dr. Sam Ryan, Burton comes even more controlled, intense sensuality than Helen Mirren in *Prime Suspect*. Her movements are cat-like, slow, concentrated and deliberate. As she bends over mutilated bodies she speaks in a low, precise purr. She has that all-too-rare gift of making an autopsy seem sexy.

Much play is made of the counterpoint between the investigation and Ryan's lectures, which

reveal her personal manifesto: "Be confident within yourself before you commit your thoughts to other people. And if you're unsure, then say nothing." So no second career as a politician then.

It is Burton's fastidious, controlled manner, suggesting swells of latent emotion, which makes this series so compelling, and her passionate conviction that science holds the key to truth, a trait she shares with Mike Levine.

Like many pop science docu-



Paul Hoggart

mentaries, this tried very hard not to bore us. We had a wide range of catchy, atmospheric background music and special effects applied to the film of people doing unremarkable things with test-tubes. After a while this began to feel incongruous, because, if I got it right, the programme was describing a discovery as momentous as Darwin's theory of evolution.

It all started when Levine set out

to learn how and why some fruit flies grow legs in places where they should be growing antennae. The painstaking process of isolating genes led to the discovery that each of the fly's eight basic segments was formed according to a pattern determined by a single controlling gene. A tiny misstep in the way this gene affected the embryo's DNA would lead to the abnormality.

Hot news for fruit flies, not so shattering for us, until Levine and his colleague Bill McGinnis (who looks like Flinders, the Simpsons' dorky neighbour, but shares Levine's enthusiasm) found the same pattern in every other species they analysed, including human beings. From silverfish to Michael Fish, we are all "running on the same genetic software", it seems.

If you put the eye-forming gene from a mouse into a fruit fly, it will trigger the growth of a perfect extra fruit fly eye. I dread to think what will happen to the remaining

rhinos when the Chinese latch on. The process of evolution itself is determined by the way these genes can trigger mutations, and the development of life-forms becomes a massive series of genetic experiments in which "hopeful monsters" try their luck on life's test track. We ourselves are a kind of "sexually mature baby chimp", the product of some ancient genetic timing variation in the embryo of our common ancestor.

The possibilities of manipulating this process are mind-boggling, and inevitably a Boston pharmaceutical outfit has bought the rights to a genetic agent called "hedgehog". This allows all kinds of medical interventions, including growing new bone tissue and repairing cancerous skin. There is a little "hedgehog" in all of us, so I'd like to know more about the ethics of patenting it.

If this was a fly-in-the-lab docu-

mentary, *The Real Monty* (CS) was a more traditional fly-on-the-wall effort. Except that the flies had been removed, along with the rest of the trousers. This format works if the participants make good viewing. The director can stand back and let them expose themselves, in this case literally.

This group of male strippers from Sheffield turned out to be as quirky, ingenious and humorously self-deprecating as the film characters who inspired their act, and the programme was full of priceless reflections and asides.

"Denim" for example, was "the epitome of a northern stripper. He's young, he's fresh" and has a day job in sales. "I got into stripping by chance," said another. "I was actually in the Post Office." "Each of the guys would tell you he has two left feet," apparently. "It would be nice if we could be called tripod" mused another. Time for some "hedgehog"?

BBC1

6.00am Business Breakfast (77575)

7.00 BBC Breakfast News (17755)

9.00 Style Challenge (9141353)

9.25 All Over the Shop (8191038)

9.50 Kilroy (1) (8339882)

10.30 Can't Cook, Won't Cook (1) (8873369)

10.55 The Really Useful Show (1) (1559881)

11.35 Real Rooms Kenilworth youth club's

draw rooms are brightened up (1950001)

12.00 News (1) (8330001)

12.05pm Call My Bluff (5941556)

12.35 Wipeout (2876440)

1.00 News (1) and weather (40046)

1.30 Regional News (1) (54558440)

1.40 The Weather Show (56851339)

1.45 Neighbours Ann receives a glamorous

job offer (1) (7271610)

2.10 Ironside (1) (5946189)

3.00 Lion Country The keepers struggle to

transport five young lions to another part

of the park (1) (1)

3.30 Playdays (7870372) 3.50 The Littlest Post

Shop (7801269) 4.10 Dennis the Menace

(1757778) 4.35 L & K Friday (5612769)

5.00 Newsround (1) (8330188)

5.10 Blue Peter (1) (8417168)

5.35 Neighbours (1) (1) (872488)

6.00 Six O'Clock News (1) and weather (223)

6.30 Regional News (1) (575)

7.00 Weekend Watchdog with Anne

Robinson (1) (83301)

7.30 Top of the Pops with Bryan Adams,

James, Texas, and RnM and DJM

as Jason Nevill (1) (759)

8.00 Tomorrow's World Special edition

featuring live experiments in which

viewers can take part (1) (439)

8.30 A Question of Sport with guests

Naseem Hamed, Richard Durwood,

Dewi Morris and Diane Modahl joining

team captains Ally McCoist and John

Parrott. Hosted by Sue Barker (1) (3846)

9.00 Nine O'Clock News (1) and weather

(4310)

9.30 The Client (1994) Susan Sarandon stars

as Reggie Love, a tough lawyer who risks

her life by agreeing to represent an

11-year-old boy with dangerous information

about a government official's

disappearance. Directed by Joel

Schumacher (61575) Widescreen 9.30

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BBC2

6.10am Reading the Landscape Looking for

Clues (4775851) 7.00 See Hear News (1)

(782778)

7.15 Teletubbies (5839469) 7.40 Captain

Cowen (8475453) 8.00 The Really Wild

Show (1) (1) (38440) 8.30 Mr. Bern

(5290409) 8.45 The Record (3850440)

9.10 Music Makers (7021846) 9.30 Watch

(5444846) 9.45 Come Outside (5630001)

10.00 Teletubbies (59440) 10.30 Look

and Read (5928001) 10.50 The

Geography Programme (5948555) 11.00

Landmarks (1) (7070310) 11.30 English

File (5907) 12.00 Soane (48827)

12.30pm Working Lunch (57440)

1.00 Funnies (1) (24443339) 1.05

Bananas (1) (24433310) 1.10 The

Leisure Hour (7347827) 2.10 Male or

Break (2273852) 2.40 News (1)

(8951488) 2.45 Kicking and Screaming

(1) (1402702) 3.25 News (1) (1413391)

3.30 How Does Your Garden Grow?

(881)

4.00 Change That (1) (4640339) 4.25 Ready,

Steady, Cook (4619198) 4.55 Esther: Car

obsession (5702020) 5.30 Today's the

Day (552)

6.00 The Simpsons (1) (867223)

6.25 Robot Wars with Jeremy Clarkson and

Phillip Forrester (1) (862914)

6.55 Electric Circus Danni Minogue

showcases the latest news from the

entertainment and computer games

worlds (78952)

7.10 Timewatch The true story of Pocahontas

(1) (1) (786885)

7.30 Top of the Pops with Bryan Adams,

James, Texas, and RnM and DJM

as Jason Nevill (1) (759)

8.00 Tomorrow's World Special edition

featuring live experiments in which

viewers can take part (1) (439)

8.30 A Question of Sport with guests

Naseem Hamed, Richard Durwood,

Dewi Morris and Diane Modahl joining

team captains Ally McCoist and John

Parrott. Hosted by Sue Barker (1) (3846)

9.00 Nine O'Clock News (1) and weather

(4310)

9.30 The Client (1994) Susan Sarandon stars

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AM: The Client (1994) Susan Sarandon stars

as Reggie Love, a tough lawyer who risks

her life by agreeing to represent an

11-year-old boy with dangerous information

about a government official's

HTV

6.00am GMTV (4575846)

6.25am GMTV (4575846)

6.55 Regional News (1) and weather

(5701643)

10.00 The Time, the Place (1) (20594)

10.30 This Morning (1) (14350310)

12.20pm Regional News (8382855)

12.30 News (1) and weather (2802855)

12.55 Wish You Were Here? (1) (1) (2887556)

1.25 Home and Away (1) (24225730)

1.50 Murder, She Wrote (1) (8015846)

2.49 HTV CrimeStoppers (594725)

2.50 WALEX: Get Gardening New series

begins with tips on maintaining a healthy

lawn (1) (1) (5479391)

2.50 Garden Calendar New series (1)

(6479391)

3.20 News (1) (1418846)

3.25 Regional News and weather (1417117)

3.30 Rosie and Jim (7823255) 3.40

Timbuctoo (7975353) 3.50 Tom and

Vicky (1575371) 4.00 Zzzap! (1059488)

4.15 Hurricanes (1) (1749117) 4.40 Crazy

Cottage (1) (5613931)

5.10 A Country Practice (2887778)

5.40 News (1) and weather (571310)

6.00 Home and Away (1) (1) (801049)

6.25 HTV Weather (59917)

6.30 HTV News (1) (843)

7.00 Bruce Forsyth's Play Your Cards

Right (1) (589)

7.30 Coronation Street News of Ken's date

leads out (1) (827)

8.00 Airline Things are heating up on the

cabin-crow training course (1) (8407)

8.30 The Bill Lucky Find A girl goes missing

by the river and Deskin sees a chance to

kill an old adversary (1) (8914)

9.00 The Grand Escape Harlowes

(Susan Hampshire) comes up

against the local hard man played by Ian

Dury, while looking after the girls at the

Marionette Club (1) (5301)

10.00 News at Ten (1) and weather

(83010)

10.30 Regional News (218468)

10.40 Dharma and Greg: Indian Summer (1)

(101339)

11.10 Friday Night Fever (1) (897952)

11.40 Renegade (332223)

12.45pm Pop Down the Pub (550588)

1.20 War of the Worlds (1) (705044)

2.10 Not Fade Away (1) (1513334)

3.05 Collins and Mason's Movie Club (1)

(7872612)

3.35 Murder, She Wrote (5491006)

4.25 Cybernet (3570708)

4.50 ITV Nightvision (1446504)

5.00 Coronation Street (1) (1) (83841)

5.30 News

5.30 News

5.30 News

5.30 News

5.30 News

5.30 News

5.30 News

5.30 News

5.30 News

CENTRAL

As HTV West except:



ROWING 52

Oxford president provides lead from the sidelines

SPORT

FRIDAY MARCH 20 1998

RUGBY UNION 54

Blast from the past called up to power Scotland



England confident of squaring series

Atherton aims to conduct upbeat finale

FROM ALAN LEE, CRICKET CORRESPONDENT, IN ST JOHN'S, ANTIGUA

IT IS a gauge of the journey England's cricketers have made on this tour that they begin the final Test this morning expecting to beat West Indies. It is a gauge of their frustration, however, that even a crushing win here would not bring the fulfilment of a series victory they might easily have secured already.

On Wednesday evening, the players were entertained on Paul Getty's yacht, moored off St John's after sailing north from Barbados. It could have been a nautical celebration of an overdue shift in power. Instead, at least for Michael Atherton, it might have been the prelude to walking the plank.

Atherton yesterday declined to contemplate the possibility that this will be his 52nd and last Test as captain. "I haven't thought about it," he said. But, of course, he has. When you have served so long, and with such dignity, you must be prepared to go before someone else insists you must.

Not that this is inevitable, even if the series is lost. The England management has mapped out its plans until the 1999 World Cup and a pillar of the structure is Atherton's retention as captain. It still seems likely that Atherton will be allowed to decide for himself if it is time for a change.

He gives no sign of thinking that way. He speaks of his team in a positive, long-term fashion. He is leading them with more wisdom and assertiveness than at any previous stage. His players still refuse to countenance his going.

It is not even as if age has caught up with him. Atherton will reach 30 on the fourth day of this match. Colin Cowdrey, who will now remain the last England captain to win in the Caribbean, was 35 before that 1968 series began.

DETAILS

ENGLAND (probable): M A Atherton (captain), A J Stewart, M A Butcher, N Hussain, G P Thorpe, M R Rampersad, R C Russell, D W Headley, A R Caddick, A R C Fraser, P C R Tufnell.

WEST INDIES (probable): P A Wallace, C B Lara, B C Lara (captain), S Chandrapaul, S L Hooper, R C Holder, J R Murray, F A Rose, C E L Ambrose, N A McLean, C A Walsh, D Ramnarine, J C Adams.

UMPIRES: S A Bucknor (West Indies) and C J Michay (South Africa). Third umpire: P Wylie.

TELEVISION: Live: Sky Sports 2, 2.00pm-9.00pm. Highlights: BBC1, 11.30pm-12.00pm. RADIO: Radio 4 (UK), 2.00pm-5.50pm, 9.15.

Atherton's lead will be lightened considerably by a victory here, where the tour began amid high anticipation and heavy rain 11 weeks ago, and there is no good reason why it should not happen. England have not only competed vigorously throughout this series, they have also been the better side in three of the four completed Tests.

Remarkably, West Indies may today retain only five of the players who won so comprehensively in Guyana last month, a selection policy that can hardly be transmitting confidence. Their new opening pair, Philo Wallace and Clayton Lambert, were, however, explosively effective in Barbados, and England must bowl at them with more subtlety. "I am very happy for them to go on playing like that," Atherton said. "We will be better prepared for them now."

"We could easily be either 2-1 up or 2-2," Atherton continued, stopping short of saying that England might conceivably be leading 3-1, but it is undeniable. "There was a high degree of disappointment over the rain in Barbados, because we had played very good cricket through the game, but we still have plenty to play for. To come away with a

drawn series would be an achievement of sorts and I am confident we can do it. We are winning a reasonable percentage of games now, which is a good sign for the future." Again, that enthusiastic long-termism.

Atherton made no secret of the fact that the team is likely to be unchanged. "Each time we have gone in with three seamers and a spinner, we have looked like winning," he said. "I think that speaks for itself."

The pitch is unlikely to amend this thinking. Its nature will be pure guesswork, for there has been only a trial club match on the square since it was relaid late last year, but the Test strip — bare of grass and extensively rolled — is thought likely to be low and slow, offering some turn.

Those of us who saw the Recreation Ground in a shambolic state during January cannot fail to be impressed by the transformation. Construction work continues on a new stand, but the sense of near-completion is an achievement in itself — a fact daily being trumpeted in paranoid newspaper editorials on this island where outside criticism is distinctly unwelcome.

Antigua's influence on the West Indies side has sharply diminished. Only Curtly Ambrose now bears a flag once carried by Richards, Roberts, Richardson and the two Benjamins. The island's pride is undimmed, though, and the success of their modernised ground is a matter of national importance.

Four years ago, the corresponding game played on a sodden pitch, was a dull draw redeemed only by a world record. Asked yesterday what he recalled of Brian Lara's 375, Atherton said wryly: "I took the slip out when he was on 287 and he nicked the next ball through there for four." He must hope for nothing similar today.

Australia suffer, page 50
Cullinan's comeback, page 50



Cool Dawn, left, jumps the third fence with a narrow lead on his way to a surprise victory in the Tote-Gold Cup at Cheltenham yesterday

Cool Dawn collects glittering prize

Richard Evans sees an owner's decision to hand over the reins bring a rich reward

THE reluctant decision of Dido Harding to step down from her own horse in favour of a professional jockey gained the ultimate reward yesterday when Cool Dawn completed a shock victory in the Tote Gold Cup at Cheltenham.

The travel company executive with a passion for racing and riding had won seven point-to-points and hunter chases on Cool Dawn but, after a disappointing effort at Wincanton last November, she was persuaded by Robert Alner, the horse's trainer, to hand over the reins.

"Taking Dido off the horse was the hardest thing I've ever had to do. Dido is a good rider but not at this level," the Dorset trainer said after Cool Dawn had made most of the running to beat

Strong Promise. "Dido doesn't ride very often. You have to be fit and she was race-rusty."

Andrew Thornton replaced Harding and the ten-year-old chaser immediately recaptured his best form, winning three races at Ascot before landing steeplechasing's most coveted prize in front of a 50,000 crowd. "To be honest, we bought Cool Dawn to be a nice, safe ladies' point-to-pointer," Harding said. "I still don't believe he has won the Gold Cup. We never expected him to be this good."

"When I rode him at Wincanton, he ran like a drain for me. The theory was that Andrew would ride him once at Ascot to get him jumping and then I would ride him again. But with each race he got better and better and it became impossible for me to stamp my foot and ride him again." Thornton was the first to acknowledge the owner's selflessness. "It took some bottle to give up the reins on a horse like him and let someone else have a go," he said.

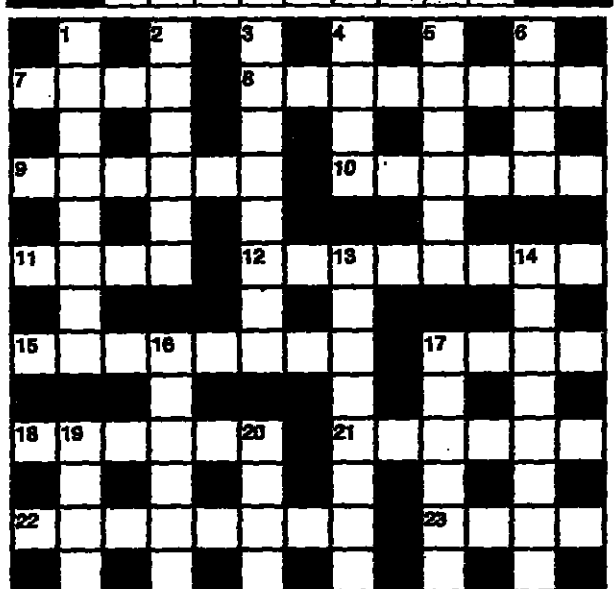
Cool Dawn's surprise win offered

only a brief respite for the bookmakers, who lost millions of pounds during the three-day meeting as well-fancied horses continued to oblige. Tony McCoy, the champion jockey, was the toast of punters yesterday as he rode favourites to victory in the last three races.

In stark contrast, Adrian Maguire's Festival misery continued as he left the racecourse in an ambulance after a bad fall from Zabadi. The jockey, who had been forced to miss the previous three Festivals, was taken to Cheltenham General Hospital with a fractured collar-bone and head and knee injuries.

Cool Dawn's rise, page 51
Maguire's heartbreak, page 51

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 1358

ACROSS

- 7 Coordinate reference line (4)
- 8 (US) train track; hustle (5)
- 9 Act of respect (6)
- 10 Two-seater bike (6)
- 11 Material source of power (3)
- 12 Fragile (china); a little glossy (palm) (5)
- 13 New convert, initiate (5)
- 14 A stride; walking speed (4)
- 15 Enjoy taste of (6)
- 21 Fat for candles; soap (6)
- 22 Monarchical status (8)
- 23 Actors in play; a mould (4)

DOWN

- 1 Revelation; lack of shelter (8)
- 2 Jacob's new name (Gen. 32) (6)
- 3 Foliage as decoration (8)
- 4 Intimation (4)
- 5 Defensive ditch (6)
- 6 New Haven university (4)
- 13 Large anthropoloid (5,3)
- 14 Netted-stick game (8)
- 16 Agricultural implement; fail (exam) (6)
- 17 A royal residence (6)
- 19 Horizontal mine passage (4)
- 20 German industrial region; river (4)

SOLUTION TO NO 1357

ACROSS: 1 Rebus; 7 Happen; 8 Vignette; 10 Effects; 11 Vietnam; 12 Thane; 14 Sheer; 15 Chess; 19 All hail; 20 Concoct; 22 Aerobics; 23 Merlin; 24 Weekly.
DOWN: 1 Revive; 2 Baguette; 3 Keenness; 4 Chef; 5 Speech; 6 Sexton; 9 Temperate; 12 Trollope; 13 Asterisk; 16 Hooper; 17 Sicily; 18 Glossy; 21 Cam.

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United pay for false economy

BY OLIVER HOLT, FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT

IT DID not take long for the revisionists to go to work on Wednesday night. They threw Manchester United onto the rubbish dump of European Cup failure with scarcely a scruple. "Tonight, we knocked out the great myth of European football," Jean-Louis Campora, the AS Monaco president, said. "Manchester United are a myth."

There was bound to be some gloating, of course. For every football supporter in England who loves the champions, there is one who hates them. For all the supposed bias towards them in the media, there is antagonism, too.

But, while no apologies should be made for Alex Ferguson and his team, while no one can deny that Monaco fully deserved to go through and that United still have lessons to learn, the finger of blame should not be pointed at the manager and his players.

It seems already to have been forgotten that, before the wear and tear of an English season took its toll, United were playing at a tempo that discomfited even the most accomplished of European opponents. With Giggs in full flight, Schuster at his most dominant and Cole in rare form, United were irresistible.

Since then, injuries have taken their toll and made the team almost unrecognisable

from the one made European Cup favourites before Christmas. Ferguson was criticised for not fielding his strongest teams when United lost in the Coca-Cola Cup and FA Cup. If he had picked his strongest XI then, United would probably have lost on more than just away goals to Monaco.

That, though, is only half the story. English sides of the past have managed to dismantle the domestic log-jam and still triumph over the best the Continent has to offer. The crucial difference this time is that Ferguson is being asked to work at a disadvantage over his leading European rivals because of the incursion of that Nineties football ogre, the City.

Since the end of the Champions' League in December, Ferguson has been frustrated in his attempts to strengthen the team. United have snood snail. In fact, they went backwards. They sold Karel Poborsky and then found themselves short of cover when Gary Pallister, Giggs and Schuster were injured.

Moves for players such as the Chile forward, Marcelo Salas, who scored such a bravura goal at Wembley last month, fell through. It can only be assumed that this was because of the reluctance of

the club to finance a deal that might have forced them to splash out £15 million. Still, when one considers that more than £25 million was wiped off the club's share price yesterday, it looks decidedly like false economy.

The result was a situation such as Wednesday night, a treasury of excellence, when Ferguson was forced to field half-fit players in an attempt to battle through. Talented but raw youngsters such as Michael Clegg had to fill the gaps that could not be plugged and others such as Ole Gunnar Solskjaer were played out of position.

While United's money masters dithered, though, Juventus and Real Madrid — the

teams that surged most emphatically into the semi-finals of the competition that United yearn to win more than any other — boosted their playing resources significantly.

On Wednesday night, Ferguson took some of the blame upon himself. "We need strengthening, no question of that," he said. "After we lost Keane with the injury early in the season, Scholes and Butt did really well immediately and that allowed me to think we could get through the season. They were playing so well but, when it came to it, we had to patch up the team without Keane and Scholes. We had lost the central midfield and, with no Giggs, the balance was not right."

His problem, perhaps, is that his paymasters have seen the wonders he has worked with his homegrown talent and have seen no need to pay vast sums of money for proven players. In a something-for-nothing culture, it takes a shock such as Wednesday night to force idle hands to reach for wallets again.

Cliff Neville, Phil Neville and Paul Scholes are likely to be withdrawn from the England squad to play Switzerland next week because of injury. Nicky Butt and Andy Cole are also doubtful.



Beckham is inconsolable

Newcastle gloom, page 53

Tomorrow in The Times
David Beckham on Posh, Gazza and England in the Times

PLUS
Lorraine
D. Gifford and
Daisy Baker

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